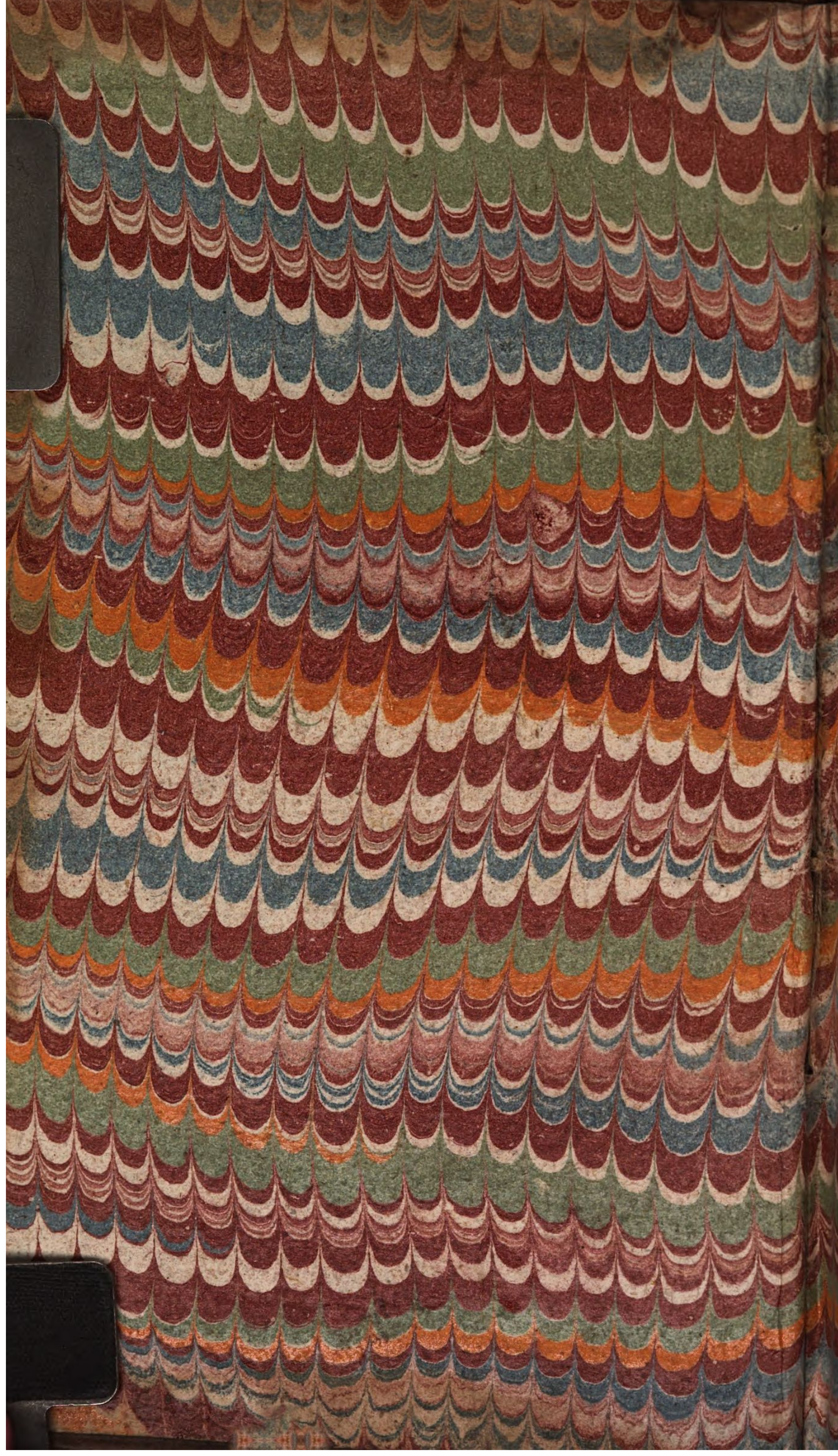








Liturg. 586

-4,2

DISCOURSES
PRACTICAL

Upon All the

GOSPELS, to be us'd thro-
out the Year.

VOL. IV. PART II.

Beginning with Ascension-Day, and
ending with the Last Sunday after Trini-
ty.

By MATTHEW HOLE, D.D.
Rector of Exeter-College in Oxford.

1 Cor. XIV. 12. Inner part.
Seek that ye may excel in the Edifying of the Church.

LONDON:
Printed by J. D. for T. VARNAM and J. OSBORN in Tem-
ple-Bar, W. TAYLOR the Ship in Fleet-Street, and
H. CLEMENTS and J. BROWN in St. Paul's Church-yard.
M.DCC.XVI.

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

Upon All the
COLLECTS, EPISTLES, and
GOSPELS, to be us'd thro-
out the Year.

PART II.

Beginning with ASCENSION-DAY, and
ending with the Last Sunday after TRI-
NITY.

By MATTHEW HOLE, B.D.
Prebendary of the Church of *Wells*, and Vicar
of *Stokegursy* in *Somersetshire*.

I Cor. XIV. 12. latter part.
Seek that ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church.

L O N D O N :

Printed by J. D. for T. VARNAM and J. OSBORN in *Lom-
bard-street*, W. TAYLOR at the Ship in *Pater-noster-Row*,
H. CLEMENTS at the Half-Moon in *St. Paul's Church-yard*,
and J. BROWNE without *Temple-Bar*. M.DCC.XVI.

DISCOURSES
PRACTICAL

Upon All the

GOSPELS, to be used thro-
out the Year

PART II.

Beginning with A CORINTHIANS-DAY, and
ending with the Last Sunday after Trini-
TY.

By MATTHEW HOLE, B.D.
Procurator of the Church of Wells, and Vicar
of Stokely in Somersetshire.

1 Cor. XIV. 12. latter part.
Ask that ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church.

LONDON:
Printed by J. D. for T. VARNAM and J. OSBORN in-Lane-
ward-street, W. TAYLOR at the Ship in Water-works-Road,
HELMERS in the Half-Moon in St. Pauls Church-yard,
and J. BROWN without Temple-Bar, M.DCCXVI.



THE
CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE I.

On the Epistle for *Ascension-Day*.

ACTS I. 1—12. *The former Treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do, &c.* pag. 1

DISC. II.

On the Gospel for *Ascension-Day*.

St. Mark 16. 14, to the end. *Jesus appear'd to the Eleven as they sat at Meat, and upbraided them with their Unbelief, &c.* 10

DISC. III.

On the Epistle for the Sunday after *Ascension-Day*.

1 Pet. 4. 7—12. *The End of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto Prayer, &c.* 18

DISC. IV.

On the Gospel for the Sunday after *Ascension-Day*.

St. John 15. 26. and part of Chap. 16. *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, &c.* 27

DISC. V.

On the Epistle for *Whitsunday*.

Acts 2. 1—12. *When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, &c.* 36

DISC. VI.

On the Gospel for *Whitsunday*.

St. John 14. 15—23. *Jesus said unto his Disciples, If ye love me, keep my Commandments, &c.* 45

DISC. VII.

On the Gospel for Monday in *Whitsun-Week*.

St. John 3. 16—22. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth, &c.* 53

The CONTENTS.

DISC. VIII.

On the Epistle for Tuesday in *Whitsun-Week*.

Acts 8. 14—17. *When the Apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had receiv'd the Word of God, &c.* 61

DISC. IX.

On the Gospel for Tuesday in *Whitsun-Week*.

St. John 10. 1—11. *Verily, verily I say unto you, He that entreth not by the Door into the Sheepfold, &c.* 69

DISC. X.

On the Epistle for *Trinity-Sunday*.

Rev. 4. 1, to the end. *After this I looked, and a Door was opened in Heaven, &c.* 76

DISC. XI.

On the Gospel for *Trinity-Sunday*.

St. John 3. 1—16. *There was a Man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a Ruler of the Jews, &c.* 85

DISC. XII.

On the Epistle for the first Sunday after *Trinity*.

1 John 4. 7, to the end. *Beloved, let us love one another; for Love is of God, &c.* 93

DISC. XIII.

On the Gospel for the first Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 16. 19, to the end. *There was a certain rich Man, who was clothed in Purple and fine Linen, &c.* 101

DISC. XIV.

On the Epistle for the second Sunday after *Trinity*.

1 John 3. 13, to the end. *Marvel not, my Brethren, if the World hate you, &c.* 111

DISC. XV.

On the Gospel for the second Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 14. 16—25. *A certain Man made a great Supper, and bade many, &c.* 120

DISC. XVI.

On the Epistle for the third Sunday after *Trinity*.

1 Pet. 5. 5—12. *All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with Humility, &c.* 128

DISC. XVII.

On the Gospel for the third Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 15. 1—11. *Then drew near unto him all the Publicans and Sinners for to hear him, &c.* 137

DISC. XVIII.

On the Epistle for the fourth Sunday after *Trinity*.

Rom. 8. 18—24. *I reckon that the Sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory, &c.* 146

DISC.

The CONTENTS.

v

D I S C. XIX.

On the Gospel for the fourth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 6. 36—43. *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful, &c.* 154

D I S C. XX.

On the Epistle for the fifth Sunday after *Trinity*.

1 Pet. 3. 8—15. *Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, &c.* 163

D I S C. XXI.

On the Gospel for the fifth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 5. 1—12. *It came to pass, that as the People press'd upon him to hear the Word of God, &c.* 172

D I S C. XXII.

On the Epistle for the sixth Sunday after *Trinity*.

Rom. 6. 3—12. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, &c.* 182

D I S C. XXIII.

On the Gospel for the sixth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Matthew 5. 20—27. *Jesus said to his Disciples, Except your Righteousness shall exceed that of the Scribes, &c.* 190

D I S C. XXIV.

On the Epistle for the seventh Sunday after *Trinity*.

Rom. 6. 19, to the end. *I speak after the manner of Men, because of the Infirmary of your Flesh, &c.* 200

D I S C. XXV.

On the Gospel for the seventh Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Mark 8. 1—10. *In those days the Multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, &c.* 209

D I S C. XXVI.

On the Epistle for the eighth Sunday after *Trinity*.

Rom. 8. 12—18. *Brethren, we are Debtors, not to the Flesh, to live after the Flesh, &c.* 216

D I S C. XXVII.

On the Gospel for the eighth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Matthew 7. 15—22. *Beware of false Prophets, which come unto you in Sheeps-Clothing, &c.* 223

D I S C. XXVIII.

On the Epistle for the ninth Sunday after *Trinity*.

1 Cor. 10. 1—14. *Brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our Fathers were under the Cloud, &c.* 233

D I S C. XXIX.

On the Gospel for the ninth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 16. 1—10. *Jesus said unto his Disciples, There was a certain rich Man, who had a Steward, &c.* 242

D I S C.

D I S C. XXX.

On the Epistle for the tenth Sunday after *Trinity*.

1 Cor. 12. 1——12. *Concerning spiritual Gifts, Brethren, I would not have you ignorant, &c.* 252

D I S C. XXXI.

On the Gospel for the tenth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 19. 41——47. *And when he was come near, he beheld the City, and wept over it, &c.* 260

D I S C. XXXII.

On the Epistle for the eleventh Sunday after *Trinity*.

1 Cor. 15. 1——12. *Brethren, I deliver'd unto you the Gospel, which I preach'd unto you, &c.* 269

D I S C. XXXIII.

On the Gospel for the eleventh Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 18. 9——15. *Jesus spake this Parable unto certain, which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, &c.* 277

D I S C. XXXIV.

On the Epistle for the twelfth Sunday after *Trinity*.

2 Cor. 3. 4——10. *Such Trust have we thro Christ to Godward, &c.* 286

D I S C. XXXV.

On the Gospel for the twelfth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Mark 7. 31, to the end. *Jesus departing from the Coasts of Tyre and Sidon, came unto the Sea of Galilee, &c.* 293

D I S C. XXXVI.

On the Epistle for the thirteenth Sunday after *Trinity*.

Gal. 3. 16. and following Verses. *To Abraham and his Seed were the Promises made, &c.* 302

D I S C. XXXVII.

On the Gospel for the thirteenth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 10. 23——38. *Blessed are the Eyes that see the things that ye see, &c.* 310

D I S C. XXXVIII.

On the Epistle for the fourteenth Sunday after *Trinity*.

Gal. 5. 16. *I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh.* 319

D I S C. XXXIX.

On the Gospel for the fourteenth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke 17. 11——20. *And it came to pass, as Jesus went to Jerusalem, &c.* 327

D I S C. XL.

On the Epistle for the fifteenth Sunday after *Trinity*.

Gal. 6. 11, to the end. *Ye see how large a Letter I have written unto you with mine own Hand, &c.* 335

D I S C.

The CONTENTS.

vii

DISC. XLI.

On the Gospel for the fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

St. Mat. 6. 24, to the end. *No Man can serve two Masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, &c.* 343

DISC. XLII.

On the Epistle for the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Eph. 3. 13, to the end. *I desire that ye faint not at my Tribulations for you, which is your Glory, &c.* 352

DISC. XLIII.

On the Gospel for the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

St. Luke 7. 11—17. *And it came to pass the day after, that Jesus went into a City call'd Naim, &c.* 361

DISC. XLIV.

On the Epistle for the seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

Eph. 4. 1—7. *I therefore the Prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the Vocation, &c.* 369

DISC. XLV.

On the Gospel for the seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

St. Luke 14. 1—11. *It came to pass as Jesus went into the House of one of the chief Pharisees, &c.* 378

DISC. XLVI.

On the Epistle for the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

1 Cor. 1. 4—8. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the Grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, &c.* 386

DISC. XLVII.

On the Gospel for the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

St. Mat. 22. 34, to the end. *When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadduces to silence, &c.* 394

DISC. XLVIII.

On the Epistle for the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Eph. 4. 17, to the end. *This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, &c.* 402

DISC. XLIX.

On the Gospel for the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

St. Mat. 9. 1—9. *Jesus entred into a Ship, and passed over, and came into his own City, &c.* 410

DISC. L.

On the Epistle for the twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

Eph. 5. 15—21. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as Wise, &c.* 418

DISC. LI.

On the Gospel for the twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

Mat. 22. 1—14. *Jesus said, The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King, &c.* 426

DISC.

DISC. LII.

On the Epistle for the twenty first Sunday after Trinity.
Eph. 6. 10—21. *My Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and
in the Power of his Might, &c.* 435

DISC. LIII.

On the Gospel for the twenty first Sunday after Trinity.
St. John 4. 46, to the end. *There was a certain Nobleman,
whose Son was sick at Capernaum, &c.* 443

DISC. LIV.

On the Epistle for the twenty second Sunday after Trinity.
Phil. 1. 3—11. *I thank my God upon every Remembrance of
you, always, in every Prayer of mine for you all, &c.* 452

DISC. LV.

On the Gospel for the twenty second Sunday after Trinity.
St. Mat. 18. 21, to the end. *Peter said unto Jesus, Lord, how
oft shall my Brother sin against me, and I forgive him? &c.* 460

DISC. LVI.

On the Epistle for the twenty third Sunday after Trinity.
Phil. 3. 17, to the end. *Brethren, be Followers together of me,
and mark them who walk so, as ye have us for Ensample, &c.* 468

DISC. LVII.

On the Gospel for the twenty third Sunday after Trinity.
St. Mat. 22. 15—23. *Then went the Pharisees, and took
Counsel how they might intangle him in his Talk, &c.* 476

DISC. LVIII.

On the Epistle for the twenty fourth Sunday after Trinity.
Col. 1. 3—13. *We give Thanks to God, and the Father of
our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* 484

DISC. LIX.

On the Gospel for the twenty fourth Sunday after Trinity.
St. Mat. 9. 18—27. *While Jesus spake these things unto
John's Disciples, behold, there came a certain Ruler, &c.* 492

DISC. LX.

On the Epistle for the twenty fifth Sunday after Trinity.
Jer. 23. 5—9. *Behold the Days come, saith the Lord, that
I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, &c.* 499

DISC. LXI.

On the Gospel for the twenty fifth Sunday after Trinity.
St. John 6. 5—15. *Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee,
which is the Sea of Tiberias, &c.* 508



PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *upon*
the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, to
be used throughout the Year.

The SECOND PART.

DISCOURSE I.

The EPISTLE for Ascension-Day.

ACTS i. 1—12.

The former Treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given Commandment to his Apostles, whom he had chosen; to whom also he shew'd himself alive, &c.



THE Collect for this Day calls to mind our Belief in the Son of God's ascending into the Heavens, and from thence directs us to pray, that we may in Heart and Mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth there world without end.

Of the Time and Manner of this great Action and Exaltation of our Blessed Saviour, we have some Account in the

2 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on

Epistle for this Day; which begins thus: *The former Treatise have I made, O Theophilus, &c.* Where by the former Treatise is generally understood the Gospel according to St. Luke; and 'tis so call'd, in respect to this latter, of the Acts of the Apostles: for which reason, St. Luke is suppos'd to be the Author of both. In both which, he dedicates or directs his Discourse to the excellent *Theophilus*; which is not thought to be the proper Name of any particular Person, but a general Title belonging to every true Lover of God, for so the word signifies: and to all such he seems to address himself in both. In the former Treatise or Gospel, St. Luke gave an account of *all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day that he was taken up*; that is, from the day of his Birth to the time of his Ascension into Heaven. In this latter he gives a Relation of the Acts of the holy Apostles; *After that Christ thro the Holy Ghost had given Commandment to those whom he had chosen.* And

The first thing he relates of them, was Christ's confirming them in the Belief of his Resurrection, by his particular Appearance to them; in the third Verse: *To whom he shew'd himself alive after his Passion, by many infallible Proofs*; as shewing them his Hands and Feet, with the Print of the Nails that fasten'd them to the Cross, letting them thrust their Hands into the Wound made in his Side by the Soldiers Spear; eating and drinking, and talking freely with them after he rose from the dead; and by many other palpable Evidences convincing them that it was he himself, in the same Body in which he lived and died. This great Care he took for their Satisfaction, condescending to all they desir'd to that end, because they were to preach and publish him to the World, and become the Witneses of his Resurrection to all People. And the better to confirm them in the Truth of these things, he would not presently leave the World after he was risen, but staid and convers'd with them upon Earth, for the space of *forty Days*. Had he gone away sooner, he might have left the World in great Doubts about the Reality of his Resurrection; they might have concluded him to be only some Ghost or Spectre, that appear'd for a while, and then vanish'd away. And therefore to remove all Scruples in so weighty a matter, upon which all the Faith and Hopes of Christians depend, he continu'd forty Days with them before he went from them, to give them all possible Assurance in that great Point; during which time he was daily seen and heard of them,
speaking

the Epistle for Ascension-Day.

3

speaking to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God: which things related to the planting and propagating of the Christian Church, to the appointing of his Apostles to be the Overseers and Instructors thereof, and to the giving them a Commission to appoint others to those Offices, for a constant and orderly Succession in it to the world's end.

Our Blessed Saviour having thus settled and provided for his Church here upon Earth, he began to discourse to them of his ascending into Heaven. But before that,

He assembled his Disciples together at Jerusalem, where at his meeting with them, he *commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait there for the Promise of the Father, which (saith he) ye have heard of me.* What this Promise of the Father was, appears both by St. Luke and St. John; viz. the Promise of the Holy Ghost, whom the Father promis'd to send in his Name, Luke 24. 49. John 14. 16. & John 15. 26. in all which places he is promis'd as a Comforter, an Advocate, a Witness, and Remembrancer. This Promise was more obscurely and remotely reveal'd by the Prophets in the Old Testament, in the Prophecies of *pouring out the Spirit upon all Flesh*, but more plainly by our Saviour in the New. Hence we find St. John declaring in the beginning of the Gospel, *I indeed baptize with Water unto Repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose Shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire:* Mat. 3. 11. Where the baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with Fire, is clearly meant of the Holy Spirit's visible descending on the Apostles in the form of Fire, partly for the enlightning their Minds with the Knowledg of Divine Truths, partly to inflame their Hearts with the Love of them, and Zeal to promote them; and partly likewise to separate and consecrate them to the Office and Duty of the Apostleship to those ends: for as Christ was consecrated to his Office by the Holy Ghost's coming down upon him at his Baptism in the shape of a Dove, and lighting upon him, and a Voice saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;* so were the Apostles anointed and set apart for their Office, by the Holy Ghost's descending upon them in the form of Fire, with a Voice saying, *As my Father sent me, even so send I you.* For the compleating of this Promise, Christ order'd his Disciples to stay at Jerusalem, where in a little time they should see and find the fulfilling of it; telling them

4 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON

them in the next words, that *John truly baptiz'd with Water, but ye shall be baptiz'd with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.* To baptize signifies to wash or purify, and was a Ceremony belonging to all the kinds of Purification among the *Jews*, especially to the receiving of *Profelytes*, and admitting of *Disciples* into the Church. Now this *St. John* did by Water only, after the manner of the *Jews*; but *Christ* promis'd them a farther Addition to it, by the visible Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, to instate them in a power of propagating the Gospel, and governing the Church of *Christ*: Which Promise was fulfill'd to them soon after, as we read in the next Chapter. And what was here done to the Apostles, as the First-fruits of the converted *Jews*, was after done to *Cornelius* and his Family, as the First-fruits of the converted *Gentiles*; for upon *St. Peter's* preaching to them, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as it had done upon the Apostles before, *Acts* 10. 44. & *Acts* 11. 15, 16. But beside this Descent of the Holy Ghost, which was peculiar only to some Persons, there was after a common Descent of it, that belong'd to all *Christians*, whereby they receiv'd Strength to perform all that God requir'd of them. This is that Spirit, mention'd by *St. John*, Chap. 7. 39. that was to be given to all that believe. And of this our Saviour spake, Chap. 3. 5. saying, *Except a Man be born again of Water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: that is, unless he be initiated into the Christian Church, not only by the washing of Water, a Ceremony used by the *Jews*, but by the Communication of the Spirit, granted to *Christians* in their Baptism, to enable them to perform what is promis'd therein, he cannot be a true Member of it either here or hereafter.

But whilst our Saviour was thus discoursing to the Disciples of the spiritual Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, their Minds ran too much upon the temporal Powers and Preferments of this World; for when they were come together, they ask'd him, saying, *Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?* ver. 6. The *Jews* were anciently possess'd of a large and flourishing Kingdom, of which they were after dispossest, and carry'd away captive into *Babylon*, and thereby dispers'd over the face of the whole Earth. Now there was a Prophecy in *Daniel*, that the Saints of the Most High should be again restor'd to this Kingdom, and possess it for ever and ever; *Dan.* 7. 18. This they

they expected to be done by the Messias at his coming, which made the Mother of Zebedee's Children petition, that *her two Sons, James and John, might sit the one at his right Hand, and the other at his left, in his Kingdom*; Mat. 20. 20, 21. With these Hopes and Expectations the Disciples themselves were too much possess'd, which made our Saviour check their Vanity; and to wean them from such Thoughts, said unto them in the next words, *It is not for you to know the Times or the Seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power*: meaning, that this Inquiry of theirs was impertinent and improper for them to make, since God Almighty hath reserv'd the Secrets and Seasons of such things to himself, and hath not thought fit to reveal the Time or Manner of his entring upon his Kingdom.

That which is fit for you at present to know, is that *ye shall receive Power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be Witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the Earth*. Where he seeks to raise their Minds from earthly to more spiritual and heavenly Matters, letting them know, that the Holy Ghost should shortly come upon them, and then they should bear testimony to the Truth of all that he had said and done; divulging it first in the great City of *Jerusalem*, then in all *Judea* and *Samaria*: and because the Gospel is to be preach'd to the Heathen World, ye shall publish it even to the uttermost Parts of the Earth.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud receiv'd him out of their sight. And this will lead us to our Saviour's Assumption up into Heaven, that great Act of his Exaltation; which being the principal Subject of our Meditations on this great Festival, must be a little the more largely insisted on. To which end, I shall consider, first, the Act of his Ascension; next, the Proof and Evidence we have of it; and then the Circumstances of Time, Place, and Manner of this great Action.

For the Act or Nature of his Ascension, we are not to understand by it only a metaphorical Translation from a lower to a higher Condition, which is often stil'd ascending; nor yet such a figurative Elevation of the Soul, as mounts it up to Heaven on the wings of Prayer and Meditation, for so we all ought to ascend every day: but by Christ's Ascension is meant a real and local Translation of his

6 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON

his natural Body from Earth to Heaven, whereby he who lived, died, and rose again, left these lower Regions, and was taken up into the highest Heavens.

This was typify'd in the Old Testament by *Enoch's* Translation into Heaven, of which we read, *Gen. 5. 24.* as also by the High Priest's going once a year into the Holy of Holies. *David's* rhetorical Speech in the 24th Psalm, *Lift up your heads, O ye Gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting Doors, and the King of Glory shall come in;* was mystically meant of the Messiah's triumphant Entrance into Glory: whom he after thus bespeaks, *Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led Captivity captive, and receiv'd Gifts for Men.* All which Types and Prophecies were fulfill'd in Christ's Ascension into Heaven, and after pouring out the Gifts and Graces of his Holy Spirit upon his Disciples and Followers.

For the Time of his Ascension, it was on the fortieth Day after his Resurrection; for he thought fit to stay so long after he rose from the dead, to manifest the Truth of his Resurrection, to settle his Church, and to provide for a Succession of Officers and Overseers in it to the world's end. And having by these things finish'd the Work which his Father gave him to do, he went up again to the Glory which he had with his Father before the World began.

For the Place of his Ascension, that was on the top of the Mount of Olives near *Bethany*, about a mile distant from *Jerusalem*; where our Saviour led forth his Disciples, and being arriv'd at the top of the adjoining Hill, he there imparted his last Mind and Message to them, and then took his leave of them, telling them that he was now going to his Father: and as the High-Priest was wont to bless the People at his going into the Holy of Holies, so did the Son of God then give his Followers his solemn and final Benediction. And while he was thus blessing them, he is of a sudden parted from them, and mounted up slowly and by degrees, so as they might for some time follow him with their Eyes, and discern his Motion; till being come up at some considerable height, a Cloud receiv'd him out of their sight, and hinder'd their Eyes from following or discerning him any further. Thus did our Saviour, in the same human Body he receiv'd from the Blessed Virgin, visibly ascend up to Heaven: How he was welcom'd there by the Father, and with what Joy he was receiv'd by the blessed Inhabitants of that Place, is a matter better to be conceiv'd than describ'd. As

As for the Manner of his ascending, that we may be sure was not by a natural or artificial means; he was not, as *Elias* was, mounted up in a Whirlwind, or carry'd thither in any fiery Chariot, but he went up by the sole Influence and Virtue of his Divine Power. No human Body can raise it self from the Grave by its own natural Strength, and much less can it mount it self up to Heaven; nothing but the Almighty Power of God, who made and rules all things in Heaven and Earth, could bring this mighty thing to pass.

For the End of his Ascension, it was first and chiefly for himself, to resume his former Glory, which he had with his Father before the Foundation of the World; and likewise to advance his human Nature, in which he did and suffer'd such great things for Man's Salvation, and reward it with the highest Honours: so we read, *For this cause God hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name above every Name, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, of things in Heaven, in Earth, and under the Earth; Phil. 2. 9, 10.* A secondary End of his ascending was for our sakes, to go before (as himself declares) to prepare a place for us, where he means shortly to receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also. In the mean time, he is there to receive our Petitions, and to appear in the Presence of God for us.

For the Proof of his Ascension, we have the Testimony of the Apostles and Disciples, who were Eye-Witnesses of it; for whilst he was talking with them, they beheld him taken up, till a Cloud inclos'd him, and intercepted their further sight of him: to which was added the Testimony of the Angels, who when the Apostles had lost the sight of him, came from Heaven to signify his Arrival thither; for *while they looked stedfastly towards Heaven, as he went up, behold! two Men stood by them in white Apparel: which two Men are suppos'd to be two Angels in the shape of Men appearing in bright shining Array; who also said unto them, Ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? Why spend ye your time in gazing after him, who is gone; he is too high to be discern'd, and too bright to be seen with mortal Eyes, and therefore you were better prepare for his second Coming, than be too much concern'd for the Loss of the first: for this same Jesus, which is taken up into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.* His going thither, is not a total de-

8 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON

parting from you; for he shall return again in as glorious a manner, as he hath now left you; as you have seen him carry'd up in a Cloud, so will he come again in the Clouds of Heaven, with a numerous Train of Angels attending him in Power and great Glory; at which time he will execute Judgment upon Earth, and then all his faithful Servants shall *be caught up together in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord; 1 Thess. 4. 17.* This is the Sum of this Day's Epistle, of which we may make the following Use and Application. As,

1. The Confirmation here given of the glorious Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, may abundantly confirm our Faith and Hope in him; for what Doubt may we reasonably entertain of him, who hath given such illustrious Instances of his Divine Power? or what Good may we not reasonably hope for, from his great Ability and Readiness to supply all our Wants, and to save our Souls? *This Hope we have (saith the Apostle) as an Anchor of the Soul both sure and stedfast, since our Forerunner is enter'd within the Veil, and made an High-Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedeck; Heb. 6. 19, 20.* This may keep us from fluctuating in Uncertainties, and fix our Hopes of Mercy and Salvation in him.

2. Christ's Ascension may teach us to receive him not only as our Saviour, but as our Lord and King. So St. Peter told the Jews, that he whom they crucify'd was made both Lord and King, his Foes are all now become his Footstool; and being ascended far above all Heavens, he is to reign for evermore. And therefore we must not only rely upon him, but worship, serve, and adore him: so we find the Apostles did, who upon Christ's mounting up and leaving of them, went immediately to the Temple, and *were there continually blessing and praising God, Luke 24. 52, 53.* So must we pay our constant Duty and Adorations to him, if we mean to follow where he is gone before; which if we are careful to do, then,

3. His Ascension may assure us of our ascending after him: for he is ascended not in a private Capacity, for himself only, but as our Head and publick Representative; and he will shortly have his whole Body with him. In his Resurrection he was the First-born from the Dead, or the First-fruits from the Grave; in his Ascension he was our Forerunner, to go before to take possession, and to prepare

a place for us in the Heavenly Mansions. From whence in a little time he will come again, and receive us to himself, that where he is, there may we be also. He arose, that Death might not hold us; and he ascended, to draw us after him. And therefore,

Lastly, Both his Resurrection and Ascension should take off our Hearts from the Earth, and raise them to the things of Heaven. Christ would not stay any longer upon Earth than was necessary for the Work appointed him to do: he would not take up his rest here, but went from hence as soon as possible; neither should we think of staying, or building Tabernacles here, but be still mounting upward upon the wings of Prayer and Meditation. Let us daily send up our Wishes and Desires after him, that they too may be our Harbingers, to prepare a place for us. The holy Patriarchs of old look'd upon themselves but as *Pilgrims here upon Earth*, and the Apostles declar'd that their *Conversation was in Heaven*. Let us not then make Earth our Heaven, nor place our Felicity in any thing here below; but set our Affections intirely upon the things above, which alone can make us happy.

In a word, let us rise and ascend with Christ in our Souls now, that we may e'er long follow him with our Bodies also: which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.



D I S-



DISCOURSE II.

The GOSPEL for *Ascension-Day*.

St. Mark xvi. 14, to the end.

Jesus appear'd to the Eleven as they sat at Meat, and upbraided them with their Unbelief and Hardness of Heart, because they believ'd not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature, &c.

THE Gospel for this Day pursues the same Argument with the Epistle; to wit, Christ's rising from the Dead, and his ascending up into Heaven: to which is added here, his sitting at the right Hand of God. The two former being handled before, shall be more lightly touch'd upon, and the latter the more largely insisted on. As for his Resurrection, that hath been evidently prov'd by his sundry Appearances to his Apostles and Disciples after his rising from the Dead; an Account whereof we have in 1 Cor. 15. 5, 6, 7, 8.

The Beginning of this Day's Gospel tells us, that *Jesus appear'd to the Eleven as they sat at Meat*; one of the twelve being then absent, suppos'd to be St. Thomas, to whom he made a particular Appearance after, wherein he condescended to all that he desir'd for his Satisfaction: because he doubted whether it was the same Body that died on the Cross, our Saviour shew'd him the Print of the Nails, that fasten'd his Hands and Feet to it, and likewise took his Hand, and thrust it into his Side, where the Soldier's Spear had pierc'd, and bid him be no longer faithless, but believing.

Here he came in to his Disciples, *as they sat at meat*, and perhaps ate and drank with them; for St. Luke tells us, either upon this or the like occasion, that *he called for Meat*: Chap. 24. 43. *He said unto them, Have ye here any Meat? And they brought unto him a Piece of broil'd Fish, and of an Honey-*

Honey-comb, the common Food of Fishermen; and *he took it, and did eat before them.* And this he did, to convince them of the Reality of his Person, that he had a true human Body, and not a Body of Air, as they fondly imagin'd, but that it was he himself, with whom they had formerly convers'd; being subject to Hunger and Thirst, and sustain'd by the same Food and Nourishment as they were.

And having given them such palpable Proofs of his Person, as might very well remove all just Doubts, he began to *upbraid them for their Unbelief and Hardness of Heart, because they believ'd not them which had seen him, after he was risen.* Of their great Backwardness of Belief, we read in sundry Places of the Evangelists: St. Mark in this 16th Chap. ver. 9, 10, 11. tells us, that *when Jesus was risen early the first Day of the Week, he appear'd first to Mary Magdalen.* She being big of the News, presently went and told his Disciples, who were then mourning and weeping for him: but they, when they heard he was alive, and had been seen of her, were so far from rejoicing at the News, that they believ'd it not. After that, he appear'd in another Form to two of them, as they walk'd and went into the Country; and they went and told it unto the Residue, neither believ'd they them: ver. 12, 13. St. Luke tells us, that when those pious Women that staid at his Cross, and brought Spices to embalm his Body for his Burial, and had therefore the Honour of his first Appearance; when, I say, those good Women return'd from the Sepulcher, and told all these things to the Apostles, 'tis said, *their Words seem'd unto them as idle Tales, and they believ'd them not;* Luke 24. 11. Yea, when certain Women who had seen a Vision of Angels which said he was alive, related this Matter to them, they still persisted in their Infidelity, and would not believe it: which made our Saviour, here appearing to the Eleven, *upbraid their Unbelief and Hardness of Heart, for not believing them which had seen him after he was risen;* as if they were unwilling to hear of his Return to Life, or their Hearts were harden'd against receiving the Impression of it. St. Luke gives us an Account of the Words us'd by him in checking their Unbelief, Chap. 24. 25, &c. *Then said he unto them, O Fools, and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffer'd these things, and so to enter into his Glory?* Where he puts the Fault not so much upon the Perverseness of their Wills, as upon the Slowness of their Understandings; they did not shut their

their Eyes against the Light, but suffer'd Fear and Sorrow to blear and darken them, that they could not see: they did not look so well as they should into what the Prophets had foretold of his Sufferings, and the Glory that should follow. And therefore to cure the Blindness and Backwardness of their Faith, he began *at Moses and all the Prophets, and expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself*; ver. 27. He shew'd them what God had decreed, and the Prophets had reveal'd concerning his Death and Resurrection; and thereby their Eyes were so open'd, that they knew him; and their Minds so enlightned, that they declare their Belief both of his Person and Doctrine: their Faith overcame their Fears, and all their Doubts were turn'd into Assurance and Extasies of Joy; yea St. Thomas, the most diffident and distrustful of all the Company, became so well satisfy'd, as in the Strength of his Faith to cry out, *My Lord, and my God*. And indeed,

The Divine Providence seems so to have order'd Matters, that the Testimony of those, that were to publish to the World our Lord's Resurrection, might be render'd the more credible from the great Averseness and Difficulty themselves had at first to admit or believe it: and St. Thomas's standing out and demanding farther Experiments, after the rest were convinc'd, serv'd the more abundantly to establish the Truth of it.

When our Blessed Saviour had by these means confirm'd their Faith and Hopes in him, he gave them a Commission to go into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature. St. Matthew expresses this Commission in these words; *Go and teach, or make Disciples in all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost*; Mat. 28. 19. And here, for the better executing of this Commission, 'tis added by St. Mark, *He that believeth and is baptiz'd, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damn'd*. Where Faith in Christ, and Baptism in his Name, are made the Conditions of that Salvation, which he as a Saviour hath purchas'd for them. So that without Faith 'tis impossible to please God, or save our own Souls; and without Baptism, where it may be had by duly qualify'd and authoriz'd Persons, 'tis impossible to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Moreover, for the better propagating the Gospel in all Places where they should come, he subjoins this Encouragement in the next words: *And these Signs shall follow them*

them that believe; In my Name shall they cast out Devils, they shall speak with new Tongues, they shall take up Serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: They shall lay Hands on the Sick, and they shall recover, &c.

The meaning whereof is, that their Commission should be back'd with a Power of doing Miracles, to gain the greater Credit and Success to it; for the Holy Spirit should be pour'd down upon them, and that should give them power over evil Spirits, and enable them to cast out Devils. So the Apostles found, for they came and told our Saviour, that the Devils were subject to them through his Name, Luke 10. 17. By the same Spirit they should be enabled to speak with divers Tongues, discovering to all Nations in their several Languages the wonderful Works of God; which they found soon after, as we read, Acts 2. 1, 2, &c. As for taking up Serpents, our Saviour gave them power to tread on Serpents and Scorpions, and over all the power of Enemies, and nothing should by any means hurt them; Luke 10. 19.

Of this we read in the Books of the Sybils, *Occidet & Serpens, & fallax Herba Veneni occidet*; that is, the Serpent shall die, and poisonous Herbs shall lose their Venom, and nothing should harm them. For their healing the Sick, and their Power over all manner of Infirmities and Diseases, we read at large in the Acts of the Apostles.

Now these Signs are generally thought to be peculiar to the Apostles, and to belong only to the first Times of the Gospel, for the more successful preaching and propagating of it; which having obtain'd and prevail'd every where, are therefore ceas'd long since, with the Reason of them: tho others will have them still remaining in the Church, as Testimonies and Evidences of God's special Favour to and Presence with it.

After Christ's sealing of this Commission, and giving his last Message to his Apostles, he took his leave of them, and ascended up into Heaven: so the Evangelist here tells us, ver. 19. *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was receiv'd up into Heaven, and sat on the Right Hand of God.*

Of his being receiv'd up into Heaven, enough hath been spoken in the Epistle for this Day; of his sitting at the right Hand of God, we are here awhile to insist on. And for the better understanding hereof, we must note,

1st, That God being a Spirit, that hath no material or bodily Parts, he cannot properly be said to have either Right Hand or Left. The Expression is figurative, and accommodated

dated to our Capacity: for the Hand being the Instrument of Power, by which most of our Actions, natural and artificial, are perform'd; therefore the Power by which God is said to act or do any thing, is usually express'd by the *Hand of God*. And because the right Hand, by being more frequently us'd than the left, acquires a greater Strength and Activity; therefore the infinite Strength and Power of God is often set forth and signify'd by the *right Hand of God*. Moreover,

The right Hand is ever esteem'd the Place of greatest Honour and Dignity. Hence *Solomon* sitting on his Throne is said, in honour to his Mother, to *seat her at his right Hand*, 1 Kings 2. 19. And therefore the right Hand of God is us'd to denote the highest Honour and Dignity in his Presence. Again,

Because Gifts are generally given and receiv'd by the right Hand, therefore the right Hand of God is sometimes set to signify his Bounty, and the Blessedness of those that receive it; according to that of the Psalmist, *In thy Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at thy right Hand are Pleasures for evermore*; Psal. 16. ult. In short then, by the right Hand of God, here we are to understand the greatest Power, the highest Honour, the purest Pleasure, and the surest Happiness.

2dly, The *sitting* at the right Hand of God, is not meant of any one determinate Posture of the Body; for *St. Stephen*, *looking up steadfastly into Heaven*, is said to see *Jesus standing* at the right Hand of God, *Acts* 7. 56. And *St. John* represents him as *lying in his Father's Bosom*, *John* 1. 18. But by *sitting* here is meant the enjoying, inhabiting and possessing this superlative Degree of Glory. And because *sitting* is a Posture of Rest, Honour, Command and Continuance, therefore *Christ's sitting* at the right Hand of God implies his eternal and undisturbed Enjoyment of the highest Honour, Power and Happiness with God in the highest Heavens. Of this *David* prophetically foretold long before, *Psal.* 110. 1. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right Hand, till I have made thine Enemies thy Footstool*. This Prophecy our Saviour applies to himself, as not spoken literally of the natural Son of *David*, but mystically of the Son of God, *Mat.* 22. 44, 45. which made him say to the Chief Priests and Elders before his Death, *Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting at the right Hand of Power*; *Mat.* 26. 64.

But

But what Benefits or Privileges accrue from Christ's Session at the right Hand of God? Why, very great and noble ones indeed, both with respect to Christ himself, and to all his faithful Followers. I shall mention only two of them: and they are, a compleat Victory over his and our Enemies; and his powerful Intercession, or Appearance in the Presence of God for us.

(1.) I say, Christ's sitting at the right Hand of God assures us of a compleat Victory over his and our Enemies; so we read, *Heb. 10. 12, 13. He is set down at the right Hand of God, from henceforth expecting till all his Enemies be made his Footstool.* And elsewhere, *He must reign till he hath put all Enemies under his Feet, 1 Cor. 15.* Where the Apostle in both those Expressions, of *making his Enemies his Footstool,* and *putting them under his Feet,* alludes to the antient Custom of the Eastern Conquerors, who were wont to tread upon the Necks of their subdued Enemies. So we read of *Joshua*, who having made five Kings his Prisoners, said unto the Men that went with him, *Come near, and put your Feet upon the Necks of them, Josh. 10. 4.* which was a Token of a perfect Conquest and Subjugation of them.

Now this Victory of our Saviour's extends not only to the temporal Enemies of his Church, such as the Jews and Gentiles were of old, and all Opposers of his Kingdom ever since; but likewise to all the spiritual Enemies of our Souls, and our Salvation; such as Sin, Satan, Death and Hell: all which are perfectly subdued to him, by the Merits of his Death, the Power of his Resurrection, the Triumphs of his Ascension, and the Glory of his Session at God's right Hand. This is confirm'd to us by *St. Paul*, who tells us, that *God raised him from the Dead, and set him at his own right Hand in heavenly Places, far above all Principalities and Powers, Might and Dominions, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his Feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the Church: Eph. 1. 20, 21, &c.* And *St. Peter* to the same purpose; *Jesus is gone into Heaven, and is at the right Hand of God; Angels, and Authorities, and Powers being made subject unto him. 1 Pet. 3. 22.*

(2.) Another Privilege proceeding from Christ's sitting at the right Hand of God, is his being an Intercessor and Mediator for us at his right Hand. This is one great Use he makes of his high Advancement, to be ready at hand to plead our Cause, and to appear in the Presence of God for

us :

us: *If any Man sin (saith St. John) we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who ever liveth to make Intercession for us; 1 John 2. 1. Heb. 7. 25.* And if it be a Matter of so great Favour and Benefit to have a Friend in the Courts of Princes, how much greater Honour and Advantage is it to have a Friend and Favourite in the Court of Heaven? Where, as the things we ask are much greater, so have we need of a more powerful Intercessor; and a greater we cannot have than the Son of God, who by pleading his Merits at the Throne of Grace, is sure to obtain Mercy and Grace, to help in time of need.

This is the Gospel for this Day, which we may improve in the following Particulars.

1st, From the Disciples Backwardness to believe the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, we may learn to pray for the Increase and Establishment of our Faith in him; for if the Faith of the Apostles fail'd, who had all the Opportunities and Encouragements to believe, how much more may ours fail, who have so many Suggestions and Temptations to disbelieve him? The Sadduces of old deny'd both Christ's Resurrection and ours; and we have too many Sadduces still, who seek by all means to undermine the Belief of both: which should teach us to *watch and pray, that we be not led into Temptation*, but may continue firm and *stedfast in the Faith* to the end.

2^{dly}, From Christ's being exalted to the right Hand of God, we may learn the infinite Wisdom and Justice of God the Father, in recompensing the Sufferings of his Son with so high and honourable a Reward. He humbled himself so low as the Grave, and descended into Hell by his Father's Appointment; and therefore it was but fit that he should be exalted to the highest Heavens, and seated in the most honourable Place there; and so he is, being set down at the right Hand of the Majesty on high: and as no Abasement could be lower, so no Advancement can be higher than his.

3^{dly}, From Christ's Exaltation at the right Hand of Power and Glory, we may learn all due Reverence and Subjection to him: for *God hath thus highly exalted him, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, and every Tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father; Phil. 2. 9, 10, 11.* Let us then be Subjects of his Kingdom of Grace here, that we may become the Subjects of his Kingdom

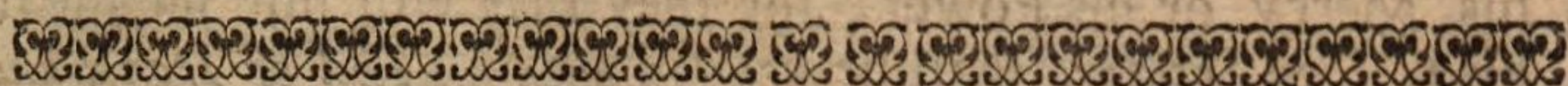
Kingdom of Glory hereafter: subject we must be either to his Mercy or his Power; for they that will not submit to his *Golden Scepter*, shall be *bruised with his Rod of Iron*; and those his *Enemies*, that will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him. Luke 19. 27.

4thly, From Christ's sitting at the right Hand of God, we may learn to triumph over Death and the Grave in the Words of the Apostle; *O Death! where is thy Sting? O Grave! where is thy Victory?* But Thanks be to God who giveth us the Victory thro our Lord Jesus Christ; 1 Cor. 15. We may challenge all our ghostly Enemies to do their worst in the Words of the same Apostle; *Who shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect?* It is Christ that died, or rather that is risen again, and set down at the right Hand of God to make Intercession for us; Rom. 8. 34.

5thly, From Christ's sitting at God's right Hand, let us learn by the Eye of Faith frequently to look up to him, to enable us to bear up with Courage under all the Troubles and Tribulations of this World: So St. Stephen did, who looking up stedfastly into Heaven, saw the Son of God standing at his right Hand; and from that Prospect he look'd down with Contempt on this World, and despis'd all the Rage and Malice of his Persecutors, Acts 7. latter end. And so the Apostle exhorts all good Christians to do, Heb. 12. 2. *Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Glory that was set before him, endured the Cross, and despised the Shame, and is now set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God.*

6thly, From Christ's interceding for us at the right Hand of God, let us learn to come boldly to the Throne of Grace; where we have a prevalent Friend and Advocate to obtain Grace and Mercy for us. And let us so rely upon his Intercession, as not to seek to any other Mediators; for there is one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus: He hath all Power both in Heaven and Earth; and therefore as we have no need, so neither have we any warrant to have recourse to any other.

Lastly, From Christ's being at the right Hand of God, we may learn the great Lesson of Heavenly-mindedness; to seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right Hand of God, Col. 3. 2. In a word, let us raise up our Hearts and Desires after him, that where he is, there may we in time be also: Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE III.

The EPISTLE for the Sunday after *Ascension-Day*.

1 Pet. iv. 7——12.

The End of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto Prayer, and above all things have fervent Charity among your selves; for Charity shall cover the Multitude of Sins, &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of God's exalting his only Son Jesus Christ with great Triumph unto his Kingdom of Heaven; and thence takes occasion to beseech him not to leave us comfortless, but to send to us his Holy Ghost to comfort us, and to exalt us unto the same place, whither our Saviour Christ is gone before.

To this end, the Epistle for the Day puts us in mind of the approaching End and Consummation of all things, that we may be fit to be receiv'd at last into that holy place, which Christ is gone before to prepare for us. In this Epistle then we may observe,

First, A Proposition, in these words, *The End of all things is at hand.*

Secondly, Some preparatory Vertues or Graces that help to fit us for it. And they are,

1st, Sobriety or Temperance in the Use of God's Creatures; *Be ye therefore sober.*

2dly, Watchfulness or Diligence in Prayer; *And watch unto Prayer.*

3dly, Fervent Love and Charity among our selves, which will cover a Multitude of Sins.

4thly, Hospitality to be used one to another without grudging; and this to be shew'd by ministring the Gifts we have received, as occasion shall require, like good Stewards of the manifold Grace of God.

5thly, Teaching and instructing the People, as God hath directed

directed us, and *ministring to them, according to the Ability that God giveth us.*

To which is added, the End we are to aim at in all these things; to wit, *that God in all things may be glorified thro Jesus Christ.*

These are the things here recommended to prepare us for the Coming of the Holy Ghost, and after that for the Conclusion and Consummation of all things; which must be therefore particularly handled. I begin then with the Proposition laid down in these words, *The End of all things is at hand*; where we are to enquire what is meant by *the End of all things*, and how it is said to *be at hand*. For the

First, By the End of all things, some understand the End of the Jewish State, by the Destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*, when the whole Polity and Government of the Jews was dissolv'd, and they came under the Power and Subjection of the *Romans*: Of this we read in *St. Matt. 24.* where our Saviour foretold the utter Ruin and Destruction of that obdurate Nation, for rejecting of him, and casting the Word of Salvation from them; telling them, that the Temple, of which they boasted, should be raz'd to the Ground, not having *one Stone of that stately Fabrick left upon another, that should not be thrown down*: which Destruction was to be usher'd in with many amazing Signs and Tokens, such as the Coming of false Christs and false Prophets, with Signs in the Heavens, and on Earth Distress of Nations; Mens Hearts failing them for fear of what is coming upon them; Wars and Rumors of Wars; the Sea and the Waves roaring, and the like; of which we read in that Chapter. When these things were fulfil'd, and the End of the Jewish Church and State came by the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, then happen'd that which is sometimes call'd *συντέλεια τῆς αἰῶνος*, the Consummation of the Age; and here *τὸ τέλος πάντων*, the End of all things.

Others again, by the End of all things here understand the End of the World; of which they take the fore-mention'd Signs to be the Forerunners: so they understand that of *St. Peter, 2 Epist. 3. 10.* where, speaking of the Coming of the Lord at the last Day, 'tis describ'd by the *Heavens passing away with a great Noise, the Elements melting with fervent Heat, and the Earth's being burnt up with all things in it.* This may be properly call'd the End of all things,

20 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

tho the former may not be excluded, as presaging and leading to this.

But how is this End of all things said to be at hand? Why, if we take it for the Destruction of the Temple and City of *Jerusalem*, it was when *St. Peter* wrote this Epistle very nigh at hand. Christ himself told the Jews, that *when they saw those Signs, they might conclude it to be near even at the doors*; adding, that *that Generation should not pass away, till all these things were fulfill'd*; *Mat. 24. 33, 34.* *St. James* likewise mentions that *Day of the Lord as drawing nigh*; for behold the *Judg standeth at the door*, *James 5.* Accordingly this Destruction came upon them very shortly after, when the *Romans* came and besieg'd it round about, laying it even with the Ground, and not leaving one Stone upon another.

If we take the End of all things for the End of the World, that likewise is drawing nigh; for we are bid to be always upon our watch, lest that Day come upon us unawares. We are often minded in Scripture of the near Approach of that Day, that *the time is at hand, that the Lord doth not delay his coming, but he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* The Time and Hour is conceal'd from us on purpose, that we may be continually upon our guard, and put our selves in a constant Readiness and Preparation for it.

And this will lead me, in the next place, to those preparatory Vertues or Graces here recommended to fit us for the coming of that time. The

1st Whereof is Sobriety; The End of all things is at hand, *Be ye therefore sober.* Now Sobriety or Temperance is that Vertue, that guides us aright in the modest and moderate Use of God's Creatures: when they are distinguish'd, as they sometimes are, Sobriety is a Moderation in Drinking, in opposition to Drunkenness; and Temperance in eating, in opposition to Surfeiting and Gluttony: but both consisting in the moderate Use of God's Creatures, are commonly reckon'd as one Vertue, call'd sometimes by the Name of Sobriety, and sometimes by that of Temperance; and so are they to be here consider'd.

But what is that moderate Use of God's Creatures, wherein this Vertue consists? Why, that will be best known, by considering the Ends for which God gave them. And they were,

(1.) For

Epistle for the Sunday after Ascension-Day. 21

(1.) For preserving the Life of our Bodies, which depends upon the daily Food and Nourishment we receive from these Creatures. Our Bodies are of that moulding Frame and Constitution, that they stand in continual need of Sustenance to repair and support them; and therefore God is graciously pleas'd to afford a constant Supply of Food to satisfy the two craving Necessities of Nature, Hunger and Thirst; giving Meat for the one, and Drink for the other; without which they would prove deadly, and Nature would sink and fail under the want of both. Again,

(2.) God hath given us his Creatures, not only to preserve the Life, but the Health, Strength, and Vigour of our Bodies: he hath taken care as of our Being, so likewise of our Well-being; and therefore hath not ty'd us up to the pinching Necessities of Nature, that is, to eat no more than will just keep us from starving, and to drink no more than what will barely keep us from perishing with Thirst; but hath graciously allow'd us Plenty, to maintain the Health and Strength of our Bodies, that they may be the better fitted for the Work and Business of our Calling.

(3.) Another End or Use of God's Creatures, is for the innocent chearing and refreshing of the Mind, that it may the better bear up under the Burden of worldly Cares and Sorrows, for these are apt to sink and lower the Spirits: and therefore God hath given these worldly Comforts to be as Cordials to support them. Hence we read of Bread to strengthen, and Wine to chear the Heart of Man, and Oil to give him a chearful Countenance; which things may be lawfully us'd to those Ends: for God hath not only allow'd, but commanded us to rejoice in the good things wherewith he hath blessed us; and hath given us his Creatures not barely for Necessity, but Delight.

These are the Ends for which they are bestow'd; and consequently whilst we keep within these Bounds, using the Creatures of God for the preserving of Life and Health, for increasing the Strength of the Body, and the Chearfulness of the Mind, we observe the Rules of Sobriety and Temperance: but they who transgress these Bounds, by eating to Surfeiting, and drinking to Drunkenness; they who instead of cherishing, enfeeble their Nature, using the Blessings of God to the impairing their Health, and drowning the Vigour and Activity both of Body and Mind; such as these abuse God's Creatures by Riot and Excess, and turn the Instances of the Divine Bounty into the Instruments of their own Ruin.

22 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

Now the End of all things being at hand, the Apostle wills us to be sober and temperate in all things, and to avoid all Abuse or intemperate Use of any of God's Creatures; that we may render a good Account of them, and receive the Reward of so doing. To this we are frequently exhorted in Holy Scripture, from this Consideration of the End of all things drawing nigh: In the 21st of St. Luke, our Saviour speaking of the sudden Coming of the Lord, advises, ver. 24. *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your Hearts be overcharg'd with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and the Cares of this Life, and so that Day come upon you unawares.* St. Paul, from the Night's being far spent, and the Day's being at hand, exhorts to cast off the Works of Darkness, particularly mentioning Rioting and Drunkenness, as Vices that altogether unfit us for that season, Rom. 13. 12, 13. Let us that are of the Day (saith he) be sober, 1 Thess. 5. 8. and elsewhere he exhorts to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, looking for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; Tit. 2. 12, 13. Let your Moderation be known unto all Men, the Lord is at hand; Phil. 4. 5. that is, let us moderate our Desires for the good things, and our Passions under the evil things of this Life, and that will prepare us for the coming of the Lord. And that is the first Vertue here prescrib'd to that end: *The End of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober.*

The 2^d is Watchfulness; *And watch unto Prayer.* The Certainty of the Coming of the Lord, together with the great Uncertainty of the Time of it, is sufficient to set all Wise Men upon their watch, to be ever ready against that great and important Season; considering the great Benefit of being prepar'd, and the great Danger of being surpriz'd at his Coming: the former will welcome us into our Master's Joy, the latter will doom us to endless Woe and Sorrow. *Watch therefore* (saith our Saviour, Mat. 24. 42.) *for ye know not the Day or Hour when your Lord cometh.* His Coming (he tells us) will be *as a Thief in the Night;* which is wont to be in the deepest Silence and Darknes, when he is least thought of or expected; and therefore the Apostle calls upon us, not to sleep as do others, but to watch and be sober; that is, not to be lull'd into Supineness and Security by Luxury and Excess, but to be always in a Posture of Readiness by Watchfulness and Sobriety. To encourage us all so to be, we read that the faithful and wise Servant, that

Epistle for the Sunday after Ascension-Day. 23

that is found upon his guard, and ready for his Master's Coming, shall be made *Ruler of all his Goods*, Mat. 24. 45, 46, &c. But the slothful and foolish Servant, that *saith in his Heart, My Lord delayeth his Coming*, and so makes no Preparation for him, shall have his Portion with Hypocrites, where is weeping and gnashing of Teeth. Watch therefore (saith our Saviour, ver. 44.) for in such an Hour as ye think not of, the Son of Man cometh. And what he said to his Disciples then, he saith unto all, Watch; Mark 13. 37.

And this Watchfulness must be unto Prayer, which is always to go with it; for *except God keep the City, the Watchman waketh in vain*. Without the Aid and Assistance of his Grace, all our Vigilance and Care will be to no purpose, which we must always call for by diligent Prayer. And therefore we find Watchfulness and Prayer generally join'd together; *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into Temptation*. The World and the Flesh are apt to take us from our Watch, and too often betray us by their Charms and Allurements; so that some greater Force is needful to guard us from these ghostly and subtle Enemies; and without the Assistance of Divine Grace, call'd in by devout Prayer, they will be too hard for us. For which reason the Apostle, from the approaching End of all things, directs us to *watch unto Prayer*; that is, to be still upon our guard, and upon our Knees, to prevent Surprise, that the Day come not upon us unawares. To which he adds,

3dly, Another preparatory Vertue to that end; and that is, *Above all things to have fervent Charity among yourselves, for Charity shall cover the Multitude of Sins*. Now this fervent Charity implies a hearty Love and Affection burning in Mens Breasts to one another; which if it be true and sincere, as it ought to be, will restrain them from doing any the least Harm or Disturbance to their Neighbour, and will prompt them to perform all good Offices, that may promote the Welfare and Quiet of Mankind. This he would have minded *above all things*, because of the great Benefit and Comfort it will afford in this World, and the good Account it will turn to at the end of it. He that is forward to do Evil, and backward to do Good, bears no true Love either to God or his Neighbour, and will have a bad reckoning to make in the latter end: but he that hates every false way, and is ready to all Acts of Mercy and Kindness, is a true Lover of both: and blessed is he, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

24 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

We read in the 25th of *St. Matthew*, that when Christ cometh to Judgment he will proportion mens Reward by the measures of their Charity, and assign their Punishment by the degrees of their Oppression and Uncharitableness; saying to the former, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit a Kingdom*; to the latter, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire*. By which the Apostle's Advice here appears to be wise and wholesom: The End of all things is at hand, therefore *above all things have fervent Charity among yourselves*. A good Reason whereof is added in the next words:

For Charity shall cover the Multitude of Sins. To cover Sin, is in the Scripture-Phrase to forgive it: so the Psalmist understands it; *Blessed is the Man whose Iniquity is forgiven, and whose Sin is cover'd*, Psal. 32. 1. For as the covering of a thing puts it out of sight, and oftimes out of mind too, so the covering of Sin hides it from the face of God, so as not to be seen or remember'd any more. Now that which removes Sin from the sight and remembrance of God, must admirably prepare us for his Coming; for that will present us pure and without spot before him: and this is here made the happy Effect of Charity, that it covers a multitude of Sins. 'Tis a known Property of Charity, to cover the Failings and Infirmities of others; and the Reward of it will be, the covering of our own from the sight of God: for he that forgives, shall be forgiven; and he that casts a Veil over his Brother's Miscarriages, shall have a Mantle thrown over his own; neither shall the Number or Greatness of his Sins obstruct his Pardon, for Charity covers a multitude of Sins, which we should therefore above all things cherish among our selves.

4thly, Another Vertue, or rather Branch of the former here recommended, is Hospitality: *Use Hospitality one to another, without grudging*. Hospitality, in the proper Notion of it, is the entertaining of Strangers, or the receiving them into our Houses, as Occasion shall require. To this we have many Exhortations in Holy Scripture: *Be not forgetful to entertain Strangers* (saith the Author to the *Hebrews*) *for thereby some have entertain'd Angels unawares*; Heb. 13. 2. Where by Strangers we are to understand all Christians, to what Nation or Country soever they belong. By entertaining them is meant the shewing them all Kindness, not confining it to our own Country or Neighbourhood, but extending it to all the Brotherhood; for by this means some have receiv'd Angels unthought of, as
Abra-

Epistle for the Sunday after Ascension-Day. 25

Abraham and Lot did, of whom we read, *Gen. ch. 18, 19.* And others have hereby receiv'd such as have been Instruments of Blessing and Salvation to them. And therefore the Apostle here exhorts to this Hospitality, and to use it *without grudging*; that is, with all Freedom and Cheerfulness, not driven to it by Importunity or Necessity, but led to it by a willing and ready Mind. That this will prepare us for the End of all things, appears by the Words of our Saviour at the Day of Judgment, who will then pronounce some blessed for this, among other Reasons; because *I was a Stranger* (saith he) *and ye took me in*, *Mat. 25. 35.* And will declare others cursed for the Neglect of this Duty, saying unto them, *I was a Stranger, and ye took me not in*; *ver. 43.* which should teach us to live in the practice of this Duty, and not suffer the Vertue of Hospitality to Strangers to be strange to us.

This the Apostle backs with a general Exhortation, in the Close, to every one, to impart to others something of the Gift or Talent wherewith God hath bless'd or bestow'd upon them: *As every one hath receiv'd the Gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold Grace of God. There are Diversities of Gifts* (saith the Apostle) *and different Administrations of the same Spirit*; *1 Cor. 12.* God, like the Householder in the Parable, hath distributed various Talents to the Sons of Men, to one the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge, to a third the Gift of Prophecy: on some he scatters his temporal Gifts, such as Wealth, Honour, and Power, and the like; on others he bestows his spiritual Gifts, as Grace, Learning, and Understanding: and all for the benefit of Mankind, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ. They that abound in the temporal good things of this Life, are to distribute to the Necessities of the Saints, relieving them with their Wealth, and supporting them with their Power. They that are intrusted with spiritual Gifts, are to communicate them for the Good of Mens Souls; instructing the Ignorant, confirming the Weak, and in some measure consulting the Good of all: knowing that we are not Owners, but Stewards of the manifold Grace of God; whose Duty it is to dispose of the Master's Gifts according to his Will, and by his Direction, as those that must render an Account of the Distribution.

In the next words he particularly instances in the Offices of Priests and Deacons: *If any Man speak*, saith he, (that
is,

26 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

is, as a Teacher and Instructor of others) *let him speak as the Oracles of God*; that is, with all Sincerity, Reverence, and Fidelity, delivering faithfully the Mind of God, as the Oracles of old did the Will of the Heathen Deities; and likewise with all Authority, as speaking in God's Name, and as his Ambassadors. *If any Man minister in the Office of a Deacon, let him do it as of the Ability which God giveth*; that is, let him fully and faithfully discharge the Trust repos'd in him, without defrauding the Church or Poor in any thing committed to his charge: *That God in all things may be glorify'd, to whom be Praise and Dominion for ever and ever, Amen*: meaning, that the Glory of all that we have or do, may be ascrib'd to the Almighty Donor and Dispenser of all things, to whom alone it is due.

This is briefly the Sense and Scope of the Epistle for this Day; which puts us in mind of the approaching End of all things here below, and therefore wills us to be always expecting and preparing for it: being sober and temperate in all things; watching against the Temptations of the Devil, the World, and the Flesh; observing the Times and Seasons of Prayer; having fervent Love and Charity among our selves, using Hospitality one to another without grudging; cheerfully administering the good things which God hath given us; and faithfully discharging all those Trusts and Offices, wherein he hath set us. These things will conduce much to the putting us in a constant Readiness for that time, and to the making it welcome and happy to us.

To all which I shall add, in the last place, what the approaching Season calls for, the receiving the Holy Sacrament. Nothing can better fit us for the End of all things, than that which will stand us in stead when all things are at an end. This will enter us upon a new Life, not such as we lead here in the Flesh, miserable and mortal, but a spiritual and glorious Life crown'd with Immortality. Then shall we begin a Blessedness that shall never end, and taste the Sweets of those Joys that have not the least Alloy of Bitterness: the First-fruits hereof we have in this holy Sacrament, where we eat the Flesh of our Saviour, and receive a double Portion of his Spirit. Tho his corporal Presence is in Heaven, yet is he spiritually present in this holy Feast: he is there in his Graces and his Comforts, in his Merits and his Love; of all which we partake at that holy Table, to which we are now invited.

D I S-



DISCOURSE IV.

The G O S P E L for the Sunday after *Ascension-Day*,

St. John xv. 26. and part of Chap. xvi.

When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended, &c.

WE pray in the Collect for this Day, that *God would not leave us comfortless, but send us a Comforter in the absence of our Saviour.* This Gospel for the Day shews us who this Comforter is, together with a Promise of sending him, and the Ends for which he is sent: which things are to be the Subject of the following Discourse.

When the Comforter is come: The Word here render'd a Comforter, is in the Original a Paraclete, which signifies three things, a Comforter, an Advocate, and a Teacher or Remembrancer; all which Offices were necessary to the Apostles at that time, and will be so to all Christians to the end of the World. And therefore 'tis requisite that each of them be here explain'd.

But before I do that, 'twill be necessary to know who or what this Paraclete is, that we may the better see how these Offices are discharg'd by him. Now this Paraclete, as the Beginning of this Gospel, and sundry other places of Scripture inform us, is *the Spirit of Truth*, or the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity; who in all the foremention'd Senses is truly and properly a Paraclete, as will evidently appear by a particular View and Consideration of them. And,

1st, The

28 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

1st, The word *Paraclete* signifies sometimes a *Comforter*; so 'tis here translated, as 'tis also *John* 14. 16, 17. where this Spirit of Truth, so call'd as being the Author of Truth, in opposition to all lying Spirits and false Prophets, is likewise call'd a Comforter, in opposition to all deceitful and uncomfortable Spirits, that create nothing but Sorrow and Sadness; whereas this Holy Spirit administers Cordials strong enough to bear up the Spirits in all Conditions, and communicates those Joys, that are sufficient not only to keep us from fainting under, but even to make us rejoice in Tribulation. Hence we read of the Joys of the Holy Ghost, and the Consolations of the Spirit, which far exceed all the miserable Comforters of this World.

Indeed, 'twas Comfort that the Disciples wanted, when our Saviour spake these words to them; for Sorrow had fill'd their Hearts upon the news of Christ's going from them, knowing that they were to be like Orphans left destitute and friendless to the wide World, which could not but dismay and cast them down. Now in this dejected and disconsolate state, Christ tells them of one that was coming to comfort them: because Sorrow had chill'd and congeal'd their Spirits, he tells them of his coming in the form of Fire, to warm and enliven them; and because the Tongue is the Instrument of Comfort, he should come in the shape of Tongues, to minister to them a word in due season. And this they accordingly found, to their great comfort; for immediately upon their receiving the Holy Spirit, they were so chear'd and reviv'd, that the By-standers thought them to be full of new Wine: from Persons exceeding fearful, they became of a sudden exceeding full of Courage and Spirit, like Men transported with Joy. Yea, when they were evil-intreated by the World, they went away not as Persons dejected, but dignify'd with a new Honour, that they should be counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ. And thus does the Holy Spirit still perform the Office of a Paraclete or Comforter.

2dly, The word *Paraclete* signifies sometimes an Advocate or Intercessor; so 'tis render'd, 1 *John* 2. 1. *If any Man sin, ὁ ἀδικῶν ἐχόμεν, we have a Paraclete or Advocate with the Father; i. e. one to speak and act for us with the Father.* And this Office the Holy Ghost performs for us, partly by acting our Cause for us with God, partly with Men, and partly by acting Christ's Cause against the World. It acts as an Advocate for us with God, by helping us to pray, by forming

Gospel for the Sunday after Ascension-Day. 29

forming our Petitions, and inspiring us with those holy Affections, that render them acceptable unto God. This St. Paul tells us, *Rom. 8. 26. The Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities; for we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it self maketh intercession for us, with Groanings that cannot be utter'd.* Again,

The Holy Spirit is our Advocate to plead our Cause before Men; so our Saviour told his Disciples, *Mat. 10. 19, 20. When ye are brought before Governours and Kings for my sake, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.* Furthermore,

This Holy Spirit is an Advocate or Actor of Christ's Cause against the World; so he here told them, when he is come, *he shall testify of me: and John 16. 8, 9, 10. He shall reprove the World of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment: the three sorts of Causes usually try'd in the Jewish Courts; for which see the Gospel for the fourth Sunday after Easter.*

3dly, The word *Paraclete* signifies a Teacher or Remembrancer; for *παράκλησις*, from whence 'tis deriv'd, is to exhort, admonish, and call to mind. This Office the Holy Spirit executed for the Apostles, by *leading them into all Truth, by teaching and bringing all things to remembrance, which Christ had said unto them; as we read, John 14. 26. & Chap. 16. 13.* And this Office he still does for us, by instructing us out of the Holy Scriptures, the Dictates of the same Spirit; and by bringing to mind all necessary Truths for our Benefit and Consolation, as Occasions shall require.

Thus we see who and what this Paraclete is, and how he executes the Offices of a Comforter, an Advocate, and Instructor in the Church of Christ; all which are imply'd in that Word, and ought to be understood in that Latitude, as to comprehend them all. For to them that are oppress'd with Grief and Sorrow, 'tis a Comforter to cheer and revive them: to them that are in Error, 'tis a Spirit of Truth, to guide and direct them in the right way: to them that are assaulted with Temptations to Sin, 'tis a Spirit of Holiness, to support and sanctify them. In a word, 'tis a Spirit of Grace and Supplication, to help all our Infirmities, and to carry us through all the Doubts and Difficulties that we meet with in this present Life.

Now

o PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

Now this Comforter was here promis'd to come ; *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father* : which words suppose his Coming, and that suddenly too ; and so it soon after came to pass, as we shall have occasion to shew in our next. In the mean time we may observe, that Christ here promis'd to *send this Spirit of Truth from the Father* : and in the next words it is said to *proceed from the Father*. From which the Creeds and Confessions of the Christian Church have taught us to believe, that he proceedeth from both.

Having told them these things, he proceeds, in the next place, to let them know the End of this Comforter's Coming : which, among other things, was to bear testimony of him ; *He shall testify of me*. And this he did several ways : as,

(1.) By his inward Inspirations, whereby he enlighten'd Mens Minds, and gave them a right Understanding of Christ, as the promis'd Messias and Saviour of the World ; which, without the Light of God's Holy Spirit, had never been so clearly known : for *no Man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed ; and no Man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*. 1 Cor. 12. 3.

(2.) The Spirit bears witness of Christ, by inditing the Holy Scriptures, which reveal him to the World, and convey the Knowledg of him to all Nations. Hence we find our Saviour sending the Jews to the Holy Scriptures for a Testimony of him, saying, *Search the Scriptures, for they are they that testify of me* ; John 5. 39.

(3.) The Spirit bore witness of Christ, by the many Miracles and mighty Works wrought by him, for the Confirmation of Christ's Doctrine. So the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, that *the Word which first began to be spoken by the Lord, was after confirm'd by them that heard him ; God also bearing witness by Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his Will* ; Heb. 2. 3, 4. And St. Peter in his Sermon to the Jews declar'd, that *Jesus of Nazareth was a Man approv'd of God among them by Miracles, Wonders, and Signs, which God did in the midst of them, as they themselves also knew* ; Acts 2. 22. Which Miracles being done by the Divine Spirit for the honour of Christ, was the Testimony he is here said to bear of him.

Gospel for the Sunday after Ascension-Day. 31

To which may be added, the Holy Ghost's constituting and consecrating an Order of Men to publish Christ's Doctrine and Miracles to all the World, as a farther Instance of the witness he gave to him: which occasion'd those next words of Christ to his Apostles; *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning*: that is, you that have been Eye and Ear-witnesses of all that I have said or done, having been with me at the first, and continu'd with me ever since, are fittest to bear witness of me; and this must be the Employment of all that succeed in your Office to the World's end. So we read, 1 John 1. 1, 2, 3.

These things (saith our Saviour) *have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended*: that is, I have told you of mine and your Sufferings, and likewise promis'd you sufficient Comforts and Supports under them, merely to prevent Surprise, and to keep you from being offended at the Extremity of any Affliction that may happen unto you. By being offended here is meant not barely a being displeas'd, or conceiving of some Dislike, but such a Displeasure and Dislike as carry Men on to the falling from, and utter forsaking of Christ, to the denying of him, and casting off all Profession of Faith and Hope in him: And this hath been often occasion'd by the Difficulties and Hazards that attend his Service. The Scandal of the Cross prov'd a great Offence to *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, for it made the one to deny him, and the other to forsake him: *Christ crucify'd was a Stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks Foolishness*; 1 Cor. 1. 23. And many have made the Sufferings of Christ an Occasion of relinquishing him. The Prophet *Isaiah* foretold, that *he should be a Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence to the House of Israel, a Gin and a Snare to the Inhabitants of Jerusalem; and many should stumble and fall, and be broken in pieces*: Isa. 8. 14, 15. And good old *Simeon* declar'd at our Saviour's Birth, that *this Child was set for the fall, as well as the rising again of many in Israel, and for a Sign that shall be spoken against*; Luke 2. 34. Accordingly we read in the Gospel, that *many were offended in him*; that is, many took occasion to spurn and fall at him, and even to dash against the Rock of their Salvation: and all this by reason of the Sufferings that beset our Saviour, and that after happen'd to those that adher'd to him; for many stick to him in the Sunshine of Prosperity, who in the time of Temptation and Trouble fall away. So Christ

Christ himself declares, that *when Tribulation or Persecution ariseth by reason of the Word, by and by they are offended*; Mat. 13. 21. Now to prevent this Evil, and to fortify his Followers against all future Trials, he here tells them before-hand what was like to befall him and them, and withal adds those Arguments of Consolation that may well enough arm and fortify them against them.

But our Saviour does not here rest in Generals, but proceeds to some particular Instances of the evil and barbarous Treatment they were like to meet with from the World: As,

(1.) *They shall put you out of the Synagogues*; that is, they shall cast you out of all their Assemblies, both Sacred and Civil, and not admit you either into their religious or common Conversation, and thereby set such a Mark of Reproach upon you, that you shall not be familiarly convers'd with by any. This same Evangelist tells us, that *the Jews had agreed already, that whosoever should confess Jesus to be the Christ, he should be put out of the Synagogue*, John 9. 22. Accordingly the blind Man, to whom he restor'd his Sight, confessing of him, *was cast out*, as we read ver. 35, 36. & Chap. 12. 42. We are told of others *that believed on him, but because of the Pharisees were afraid to confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue*. Now this casting out of the Synagogue was done with all manner of contumelious Usage, the Officers of the Court taking the condemn'd Person, and thrusting him with Shame and Disgrace out of the Assembly; and if he had any Place of Rule or Government, he was to be depriv'd of his Office or Dignity, which made the Rulers afraid to confess him, John 12. 42. To this reproachful Usage our Saviour alludes, when he said, *Blessed are ye when Men shall hate you, and separate you from their Company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your Name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake*; Luke 6. 22. Upon this account it was, that St. Paul, speaking of the Christians in his time, said, *We are made as the Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of all things to this day*; 1 Cor. 4. 13.

But this putting out of the Synagogue signify'd not only the excluding Men from civil Commerce and Conversation, but likewise from the sacred and religious Assemblies; and so 'twas the same with Excommunication among the Jews. Hence St. Chrysostom expounds this *putting out of the Synagogue by casting out of the Temple*, and others by *driving out of the House of God*, as Persons unworthy of the sacred or civil

Gospel for the Sunday after Ascension-Day. 33

Civil Society of God's People. But beside this contumelious and reproachful Usage of their Names, our Saviour forewarns them,

(2.) Of greater Hardships and Violences that should be offer'd to their Persons; for *the time cometh* (saith he) *that whoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service*: that is, some Persons would arise, who would be so far from sparing or saving your Lives, that they would think the slaying of you not only lawful, but an acceptable Sacrifice unto God. So it happen'd to many of them in *Jerusalem*, which made our Saviour upbraid and lament over that unhappy City, for *killing the Prophets, and stoning of them that were sent unto it*; Mat. 23. 37. And in this some think our Saviour refer'd to the Sect of the Zealots among the Jews, who from *Elias's* calling for Fire from Heaven to consume the Enemy, and *Phineas's* Act of sudden Justice upon *Zimri* and *Cosbi*, both done by a Divine Impulse, took occasion to commit many Outrages, Cruelties and Murders without any due Course or Form of Law; their fiery and intemperate Zeal leading them on to a great Rigor and Extravagance of Action, under a Mistake or Mask of Religion: which shews the Sinfulness and Danger of a furious and mistaken Zeal, and what bloody and violent Attempts it runs Men upon. Of such kind of Zealots we have had sad Experience in our Days, who have committed Treason, Sacrilege and Rebellion, under Pretences of Reformation; and both Church and State groan under the direful Effects of such a mad and mistaken Zeal to this day.

Others again suppose these Words of our Saviour to relate to the many heavy Persecutions that soon after befel the Christians under their Heathen Governours, who sought to root out Christianity, by putting to death all that were call'd by, or call'd upon the Name of Christ: *Pilate mingled the Blood of some with their Sacrifices*; and we read of others slain at the Altar, taking it for a grateful Offering unto the Lord. St. Paul himself, before his Conversion, breath'd out Threatnings and Slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord; and being exceedingly mad against them, persecuted them from City to City: Acts 9. 1. & Chap. 26. 11. In all which he thought he did God good Service: he did it, as himself tells us, in all good Conscience, for he verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth; Acts 23. 1. & Chap. 26. 9. which shews what great care is to be taken to inform our

Conscience aright in all Matters, that we be not misled by a false Light to do evil; for very bad things have been done by mis-guided Consciences. We have known some have shelter'd Schism, Sedition, and all manner of Disorder and Disobedience under a pretence of Conscience; and tho God hath commanded all Men to be subject to the higher Powers for Conscience sake, yet too many have pretended Conscience for disobeying them: Which things proceed either from a wilful Ignorance, or a blind and mistaken Zeal; for into these our Saviour resolves all the Cruelties and Violence us'd against his Disciples, saying in the next words, *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

'Tis the want of the true Knowledg of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, that is the real Cause of all Persecutions against the Church; for they that have right and due Apprehensions of God, will be so far from dishonouring of him, and disturbing his People, that they will harbour nothing but Love to him, and all that belong to him. And they that know Jesus Christ aright to be sent from God, to be the Saviour of the World, will neither disbelieve him, nor destroy his Members: And therefore St. Paul tells us, that *this Knowledg* was hid from the *Princes of the World*; for had they known it, they would not have crucify'd the Lord of Glory: 1 Cor. 2. 8. And what St. Paul did before his Conversion in blaspheming God, and persecuting the Church of Christ, he confess'd it to be all done ignorantly and in Unbelief; 1 Tim. 1. 13. And this may teach us to labour after a true saving Knowledg of God and Christ; for *this is Life eternal* (saith St. John) *to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*; John 17. 3. To attain to both, we must pray for humble and teachable Minds, and Hearts dispos'd to do the Will of God; for *he that doth the Will of my Father* (saith our Saviour) *he shall know the Doctrine, whether it be of God*; John 7. 17. Now *these things* (saith Christ in the Close of the Gospel) *have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them*: that is, I have declar'd these Sufferings to you before-hand, that you may not be startled at them when they shall happen to you; but being forewarn'd of them, you may be the better arm'd and prepar'd against them when they come.

This is the Sum of this Day's Gospel; which we may thus improve.

First,

Gospel for the Sunday after Ascension-Day. 35

First, From Christ's promising a Paraclete, that is, a Comforter, an Advocate and Instructor, let us be ready to welcome him for all those Purposes; that is, let us hearken to his Consolations in all our Troubles and Distresses, and be ever willing to receive the Cordials he is pleas'd to administer, to keep us from fainting under them.

Again, Let us rely upon him as our Advocate and Intercessor, against the Cry and Guilt of our Sins; let us cast our selves upon the Merits of Christ's Satisfaction, and depend upon his Holy Spirit, who is ever ready to plead our Cause, and to make Intercession for us.

Moreover, Let us hearken to the Advice and Directions of this Holy Monitor, both in his private Whispers, and more publick Instructions; never turning the deaf Ear to either, but always listning to that Voice, saying to us, *This is the Way, walk in it, when we are turning to the right Hand, or to the left:* And then he who now guides us by his Counsel here, will hereafter bring us to Glory.

Lastly, From what hath been said concerning Christ's foretelling the Sufferings of his Disciples, let us learn not to be shaken by, or offended at them, whensoever for Christ's sake they may happen to us; but let us manfully go thro and bear up under them: and then we who now bear the Cross with him, shall e'er long be crown'd with him in his everlasting Kingdom, Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE V.

The EPISTLE for *Whitsunday*.

Acts ii. 1—12.

When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place; and suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues like as of Fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance, &c.

THE Collect for this great Festival minds us, that God did at this time teach the Hearts of his faithful People, by the sending to them the Light of his Holy Spirit; and thence beseeches him to grant us by the same Spirit to have a right Judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy Comfort.

The Epistle for the Day shews us the Time, the Place, the Manner of God's sending his Holy Spirit, together with the wonderful Effects that follow'd upon this miraculous Descent: of each of which we have here a brief Account.

For the Time, the first Words tell us, it was *when the Day of Pentecost was fully come*; that is, when fifty Days from Easter were fully compleat and ended. But why on that Day? (saith a Reverend Father on these Words) To which, by way of Answer, he adds some weighty Reasons:

As, 1st, Most meet it was, that the Coming of the Holy Ghost should be at some solemn Season or Festival, that so the Peoples Joy being in some measure stir'd, they might receive him the more joyfully: as also, that the great Concourse of People, which those great Feasts usually draw together,

gether, might afford the more Witnesſes of the Truth of it, and ſpread the News the farther. Now the Day of Pentecoſt, which, as the Name imports, was on the fiftieth Day after the Paſſover, was a great and memorable Feaſt among the Jews, becauſe on that Day the Law was deliver'd to them by *Moses* on Mount *Sinai*; the yearly Remembrance whereof drew much People together at that time to celebrate it with the greater Solemnity; which made this a very fit Season for the Coming of the Holy Ghost. Again,

2dly, This was done on the Feaſt of Pentecoſt above any other Feaſt, to keep up the Harmony and Correſpondence between the Old Teſtament and the New. 'Twas St. *Cyprian's* Obſervation, that our Saviour kept the ſame Feaſts under the Goſpel, that were obſerv'd under the Law, only upon higher and better accounts. The Jews kept the Paſſover in memory of the deſtroying Angel's paſſing over the Houſes of the *Iſraelites*; but Chriſt, in memory of his paſſing from Death to Life: and on the ſame Day that the Paſchal Lamb was ſlain, was Chriſt the Lamb of God offer'd up for the Sins of the World: which made the Apoſtle ſay, *Chriſt our Paſſover is ſacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the Feaſt.* 1 Cor. 5. 7. In like manner, as the Jews, on the fiftieth Day after the Paſſover, which was their Feaſt of Pentecoſt, receiv'd the Law from Mount *Sinai*; ſo the Chriſtians on the fiftieth Day after Eaſter, which is our Pentecoſt, receiv'd the Goſpel, or the Royal Law of Liberty, by the Deſcent of the Holy Ghost: both which are to be remember'd with Joy on this Day, call'd antiently the Feaſt of Pentecoſt, and now known by the Name of *Whitsunday*; becauſe the Chriſtians in former times were wont to wear white Garments on this Day, call'd therefore *Dominica in Albis*. At which time likewise great Numbers were wont to be baptiz'd, in memory of the three thouſand Souls converted by St. *Peter's* Sermon, and baptiz'd on this Day; of whom we read in Ver. 38, & 41. of this Chapter. This for the Time when.

Secondly, For the Place where this Holy Spirit deſcended, that was at *Jeruſalem*, where the Apoſtles were commanded to ſtay and wait for the fulfilling of the Promise of Chriſt's ſending to them the Holy Ghost: in order to which 'tis here ſaid, that the Apoſtles were all with one accord in one Place; where (as a Father obſerves) there was both Unani-

mity and Uniformity; Unanimity in their being of *one Accord*, and Uniformity in their being *in one Place*; two necessary Requisites to the Coming of the Holy Spirit, and the fittest Dispositions to receive it: for the Spirit of Unity (as the same Father tells us) will not come, but where there is a Unity of Spirit. The Holy Ghost being a Spirit of Peace and Love, abandons all Discord and Diffension, and will not come or abide there, where the Hearts are divided: even the natural Spirit or Life cannot come or continue, where the Members are sever'd and disunited; nor can the Soul animate or actuate them, unless they be join'd and meet together; much less will the Holy Spirit, who is one with the Father and the Son, and likewise came to make us one with them, and with one another, dwell with divided Hearts or disjoin'd Affections: which made the Apostles so earnestly exhort Christians *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*. This for the Place where the Holy Ghost descended, which was *Jerusalem*, describ'd to be a *Place at Unity within it self*, and therefore a fit Place to receive the Spirit of Peace and Unity.

But what was the Manner of the Holy Ghost's coming down? Why, that is set forth here, by *the Sound of a rushing mighty Wind*; by the Shape of *Cloven Tongues*; and by *the Likeness of Fire*: All which help to express the various Operations of this Holy Spirit, and to shew the Mystery of its miraculous Descent. As,

1st, We read here, that the Apostles and Disciples being thus unanimously met together in one Place, *there suddenly came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House where they were sitting*: where we read that the Spirit of God came down (as the Psalmist expresses it) *flying upon the Wings of the Wind*; the rushing Sound whereof was a Token of Inspiration, and signify'd the breathing into the Apostles the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes indeed he came silently, as he did upon *Corneilius* and his Company, and many others at *Ephesus*, where nothing was either heard or seen; but here he came audibly upon the Apostles in a Sound, and such a one too as was heard afar off; for *the Sound is gone into all Lands, and the Words of it to the Ends of the Earth*. And this Sound is said to be convey'd by a Wind, that scatter'd it in all Places round about, and denotes the Activity of the Holy Spirit; as also the Freeness and Diffusiveness of its Gifts:

for

for as the Wind bloweth where it listeth, and tho we hear the Sound of it, yet we cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit. John 3. 8.

Again, The Wind in which he came is said to be a *rushing mighty Wind*, to denote the great Force and Efficacy of this Holy Spirit: for as the high Winds sometimes blow with that Violence, as to carry all before them; so the Motions of this Holy Spirit are many times strong and irresistible, and conquer all Opposition: for we read of Stephen, that *all his Enemies could not resist the Wisdom and Spirit, with which he spake*; Acts 6. 10. And the rest of the Apostles, by this Breath of God, blew down all the *Strong-holds of Sin and Satan*, and brought into Captivity every high thing that exalted it self against the Knowledge of Christ.

Moreover, This Wind is said to come from Heaven: it was no earthly Exhalation, that arose from, or favour'd of the Earth; but a Divine Inspiration, that descended from Heaven, and exalted those upon whom it lighted above all earthly to heavenly things.

Lastly, 'Tis said of this Wind, that *it filled all the House where they were sitting*; that is, the Influence of this Holy Spirit reach'd all that were there present, and from thence diffus'd it self into all Parts of the World. This is the first thing by which the Coming down of the Holy Ghost is here set forth, viz. by a *rushing mighty Wind*. The

2d Was in the shape of *Cloven Tongues*, which appear'd unto them, as the next words inform us. The Spirit's appearing in the shape of Tongues, was an Emblem of Elocution, as the Wind was of Inspiration: and as by this the Apostles receiv'd the Gifts of the Holy Ghost themselves, so by the other they were enabled to utter and impart them to others. Accordingly the Cloven Tongues represented the Diversity of Languages, with which they were endow'd for the publishing and propagating the Gospel to all Nations.

There is indeed a Cleaving of the Tongue which doth much harm; as when Men thereby become double-tongu'd, and use it as an Instrument of Deceit and Double-dealing: But the Cloven Tongues here were for the great Good of Mankind, to enable them to declare to all People the Will of God, and the Mysteries of their own Salvation. And this was design'd as a Blessing to reverse the Curse of *Babel*: for as the Tongues were then divided to confound the Builders of *Babel*, that the Work might be hinder'd, by

not understanding one another; so on the contrary, the Tongues were cloven here, that the Apostles might understand the Languages of all Nations, and thereby the better build them up in the most Holy Faith: it being all one as to Edification, whether all Men (as of old) speak one Language; or some Men (as now) speak all: for what was lost by the Confusion of the one, is recover'd by the Knowledge of the other; and the Method of instructing the World, is preserv'd by both. Again,

3dly, These Cloven Tongues were said to appear in *the Likeness of Fire*; that is, they were inflam'd from Heaven, to kindle in the Disciples the pious Ardours of Affection and true Devotion. St. James speaks of some Tongues that are *set on Fire of Hell*, Jam. 3. 6. and they are such as are us'd to Slander and Detraction, to the Dishonour of God, and the Discrediting of our Neighbour; which things proceed from an evil Spirit, and are done by the Instigation of the Devil. But we are told here of Tongues that are set on fire of Heaven; and they are employ'd to better Purposes, viz. to the promoting the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind: which things come from a good Spirit, and are the Motions of the Holy Ghost, whose Coming we this Day celebrate.

Now the Likeness of Fire, in which the Holy Ghost appear'd, serves to represent to us the Purity, and the Power of this Divine Spirit: for as Fire is the purest of all Elements, and helps to refine other things from their Dross and Impurities; even so the Holy Spirit purifies our Nature, and refines it from the Dregs and Defilements of the World. And as Fire is a pure, so is it a powerful Element, that consumes all that is near it, and few or no things can stand before it; even so the Spirit of God is quick and powerful, it strengthens us with Might in the inner Man, and arms us against the Wiles of the Devil: for which reason the Apostles were said to *speak with the Holy Ghost, and with Power*; and to confirm their Doctrine with *the Demonstration of the Spirit and Power*.

Lastly, These fiery Tongues are said to *sit upon each of them*; which betokens their Stay and Continuance with them, and gives us to understand that the Light of this Holy Spirit is not a fleeting or transient Flash, but a constant and an abiding Flame: 'tis not like the hot Fit of an Ague, that is soon follow'd with a cold one, but like the vestal Flame, that never goes out, or the Altar-Fires, that were

were always kept burning. True Zeal will keep us constant and steddy to our Duty, without Lukewarmness and Neutrality, and make us *zealously affected always in a good thing.*

Thus we see the Time, Place, and Manner of this wonderful Descent of the Holy Ghost; from whence let us, in the next place, see what Effects it had on the Apostles that felt it, and the People that saw and heard it: both which are related in the following Part of this Epistle.

As for the Apostles, we read in the next Verse, that *they were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance.* They were filled, but not with Wine, as the Jews maliciously suggested, charging their Freedom and Readiness of Speech, as the Effect of Intemperance and Excess, and affirming them to be fill'd with no other Spirits but those of Wine; which St. Peter sharply rebuk'd, as a belying and blaspheming the Holy Ghost, *ver. 13, 14, 15.*

Again, *they were fill'd*; but not with any windy flatulent Humour, coming from the Gall or the Spleen, which some miscall Zeal and the Power of Godliness: but *they were filled with the Holy Ghost*; that is, with the Gifts and Graces of God's Holy Spirit: and then *they began to speak*, and not before. 'Twas a Father's Observation, that the Apostles were fill'd first, and then they spake; they stay'd till then, and did not presume to teach others, till they were well fitted and furnish'd for it themselves. Contrary to the Practice of some, who are all for speaking, yea and much speaking too, before they are half full, yea little better than empty; and then like empty Vessels sound loud, tho there be little or nothing beside, *Vox & præterea nihil.* None then may venture upon this Office, before they are call'd and fill'd, but must stay till they are well qualify'd for it, and not take upon them to teach others, before they are well taught and instructed themselves. This is the Order to be observ'd in this Matter, and the Method of God's appointing.

Moreover, being fill'd with the Holy Ghost, *they spake with other Tongues*; that is, with other Tongues than they did or could before. For whereas before they understood only their own Mother-Tongue, and that but badly too, they were now of a sudden able to speak all manner of Languages, *Greek, Latin, Arabick, Persian, Parthian,* none too

too hard for them. They could discourse to Men of all Nations and Countries, in their several Languages; and that too, without any previous Learning or Meditation, but by the immediate Assistance and Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. By which means they who were but poor illiterate Fishermen, became of a sudden Fishers of Men; and instead of catching the mute and silly Fish, they converted the Wits and Sages of the World, and brought in whole Sholes of Profelytes to Christianity.

Lastly, 'tis here said, that *they spake as the Spirit gave them Utterance*: they spake not of their own heads, rashly or what came first to mind, but what was dictated and directed to them by the Holy Spirit. They did not utter vain, empty, or idle Effusions, but wise, useful, and weighty Sayings; for so the Word ἀποφθέγγεσθαι, in the Original signifies not any loose or vain talking, but wise and sententious Speaking: 'tis the uttering of Apophthegms, and speaking like the Oracles of God. Hence we read that God gave them *a Mouth and Wisdom*; not a Mouth only to speak any-how, but Wisdom too, to order their Speech, and direct it to wise and useful Purposes. This is the *Utterance that the Spirit gives*, not the pouring out the crude, hasty Conceptions of our own Brain, which too many father upon the Holy Spirit; but wise, pithy, and profitable Sentences, such as befits the Holy Spirit to utter, and becomes us to hear. Once more,

Their speaking *as the Spirit gave them Utterance*, betokens the Freedom and Fluency of their Speech, which the Spirit gave them in the Delivery of their Message; that whereas before they were but slow of Speech, and in a manner tongue-tyed, they were then enabled to speak with the greatest Readiness, Courage, and Confidence, and that before all Persons, and in all Places, without being in the least afraid or abash'd at any: in all which 'twas not so much they that spake, but the Spirit of God, that spake in and by them. These were the Effects that this coming down of the Holy Ghost had upon the Apostles, who were thereby inspir'd with many new Gifts and Abilities.

But what Effect had this upon the People who saw and heard these things? Why, that the following Words tell us: they were seiz'd with Astonishment and Admiration, and that not a few, but all that beheld or heard it; for *there were at that time dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, and other*

other devout Men out of every Nation under Heaven; who were wont to come from all Quarters of the World to the Worship of God at Jerusalem. Now when this was nois'd abroad, the whole Multitude of them came together, and were confounded or astonish'd at the Strangeness of the thing, because that every Man heard the Apostles speaking to them in their own Language. This unexpected News so startled them, that they were all amaz'd, and marvell'd, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans! that is, Men born in Galilee, that had lived all their time there: And how hear we every Man of them speaking in our own Tongue wherein we were born; and as readily too, as we who are Natives of those Countries; Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the Dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphilia, in Egypt, and in the Parts of Lybia, about Cyrene, and Strangers of Rome, Jews and Profelytes, Cretes and Arabians; we do hear them speak in our Tongues the wonderful Works of God: that is, we of so many different Nations and Countries, and likewise of so many different Dialects and Languages, we do hear them preaching the Doctrine of Christ and the Miracles wrought by him in our own several Tongues, which they never knew or understood before, nor had any Opportunity of learning. And this Wonder made such an Impression upon them, that the Apostles Preaching convinc'd them of the Truth of their Doctrine; and thereby were daily added to the Church, such as should be saved.

These are the Effects which this Descent of the Holy Ghost had upon the People, it being the Means of teaching and converting all Nations, and of turning them from the Darknes of Paganism and Idolatry, to the Light of the Gospel, and the Hopes of eternal Salvation.

This is, in short, the Mercy we are to call to remembrance this Day; a Mercy too great for all the Tongues, that at this time fell on the Apostles, sufficiently to celebrate; a Mercy, for which all that Fire in which the cloven Tongues appear'd, cannot enough inflame our Breasts with Love and Thankfulness to God: In a word, a Mercy for which every Sermon we hear, coming from the Assistance of this Holy Spirit, should set us a blessing and praising God, for sending him to us. For 'twas the Holy Ghost's coming down this Day, that endow'd the Apostles with Power from on high, to plant and propagate the Gospel

pel to all the World: by which means it was, that we of these Islands, who before sat in Darkness and in the Regions of the Shadow of Death, had this marvelous Light, which arose and shone among us: by this it was that we at present enjoy the Instructions and Comforts of this Holy Spirit, acquainting us with our Duty here, and the Means of being happy hereafter.

Finally, the Apostles receiving the Holy Ghost at this time, gave them a Commission afterwards to breathe it on others, and thereby to preserve a Succession of Pastors and Teachers, for the Edification of the Church to the World's end.

For these inestimable Benefits and Blessings, let us compass the Altar with Songs of Thanksgiving: let not the Wonders of this Day, which astonish'd and converted the World, sink into Oblivion, or pass away as things to be slighted or forgotten by us; but let us remember them in the Feast of the Holy Communion, where our Saviour gives us himself, and signs over his Merits to us by the Seal of this Holy Spirit. Let us (as the Apostles did) assemble together this Day with one accord, and in one place, that we may in some measure partake of the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, that were this Day pour'd down upon them: at least let us meet together with one Heart and one Mind at God's Holy Table, to celebrate the Memory, and receive the Comforts of it. Let us call to mind that time, when illiterate Fishermen spake more Languages than the most study'd Linguists, and the Foolishness of Preaching confounded all the Wisdom of the Wise; which things were done by this glorious Descent of the Holy Ghost. O Blessed Change! when Ignorance was turn'd into Knowledge, Sorrow into Joy, Darkness into Light. Let us all then praise and adore the Goodness of God for these miraculous Dispensations, and pay our Tribute of devout Thankfulness to that Holy Spirit by which all these Things were effected. Beware of quenching the pious Ardours of this Holy Spirit, that came down this Day in the form of Fire to kindle in us the Love of God, and to inflame our Devotion, lest he come again in a consuming Fire to destroy all that wilfully resist him: in a word, let us not trample under foot the Blood of the Son of God, by turning our backs upon the Holy Sacrament, but rather let us remember him now, that we may be for ever remembered by him hereafter.



DISCOURSE VI.

The GOSPEL for *Whitsunday.*

St. John xiv. 15—23.

Jesus said unto his Disciples, If ye love me, keep my Commandments: And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth; whom the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, &c.

THE Disciples had shew'd many Signs and Tokens of their Love to Christ; as the Delight they took in his Presence, the Fears they had of losing his Company, and the Sorrow they conceiv'd at the News of his departing from them, and the like: all which were great Marks and Instances of Affection. But our Saviour here minds them of another and truer Token of their Love to him than all these; and that is, the doing what he had commanded them: *If ye love me* (saith he) *keep my Commandments.* As if he had said, Some of you have profess'd great Love to me, and yet in a time of Trial have deny'd and forsaken me: Others have cry'd, *Hail Master!* and kiss'd me; and yet have soon after betray'd and crucify'd me. And indeed it is but too common among Men, to pretend much Love and Friendship, and in words to compliment each other with *Your humble Servant*, when in deeds they prove quite otherwise; and when need or occasion requires, to shew the quite contrary. And therefore if you would prove the Truth and Reality of your Love to me (saith our Saviour) shew it by observing my Precepts, and by doing as I have directed you. This is the best Touchstone and Trial of the Sincerity of your Affection to me: and if you give me that, I will give you a higher Token of my Love to you, than you have yet receiv'd from me; for *I will*

will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that shall abide with you for ever.

I will pray, and he shall give: If Christ will pray, there can be no fear of speeding; especially considering, that he who is sued to is a Father, and he that sues is a Son: the Nearness of the Relation, and the Dearness of the Affection between them, is abundantly enough to secure the Success of the Petition; for if earthly Parents know how to give good Gifts to their Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask them? And if an ordinary Son is commonly heard of his Father, and obtains his Request, how much more shall an only-begotten and only-beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleas'd, prevail in what he asks? *He was ever heard* (saith the Apostle) *in that he feared*, Heb. 5. 7. His Duty and Reverence to his heavenly Father will not suffer his Petitions to be dismiss'd without a gracious and effectual Answer: *I will pray* (saith he) *and the Father shall give;* and between both ye shall be sure to receive.

But what is the Gift he here promiseth from the Father? Why, 1st, 'tis a Comforter, yea, I say unto you, and more than a Comforter, 'tis a Paraclete; *Παρακλησιν δωσι υμιν*, he shall give you a Paraclete: which, beside a Comforter to cheer in Distress, signifies an Instructor in case of Doubts, and an Intercessor in time of Need; all which good Offices are included in the word *Paraclete*, and are perform'd by him, as was shew'd in the Gospel for the last Sunday. Again,

2^{dly}, Here is promis'd another Comforter: *Your Father shall give you another Comforter;* that is, another besides himself: for *another* always supposes one before or beside, and that can be no other than Christ. He was a Comforter to the Disciples while he was upon Earth, and so he continues still to be in Heaven, where he appears as an Advocate in the presence of God for us, to plead our Cause, and to make Intercession for us. But another Comforter was necessary for us here on Earth, to supply the Defect of his bodily Presence; and this is here promis'd: so that Christians now have a double Comforter, the one in Heaven, to act for them there; the other on Earth, to help their Infirmities: And both are no more than need, to carry them thro the Troubles and Temptations of this Life, and to bring them to a better. Moreover,

3^{dly},

3dly, The other Comforter here promis'd, is one that will stay with us; *He shall abide with you for ever.* Christ was a Comforter, and a good one too, whilst he staid; but he was to go away after he had finish'd the Work for which he came; he was to return to the Father that sent him, and to resume the Glory he had with him before the World began. And 'twas no small grief to the Disciples, that when they had one that was a great Comfort to them, they could not keep him; and their fear was, that when they had another, he would be gone too, and so they should be ever changing, and never be at any certainty. But Christ, to remove these Fears and Troubles, tells them for their comfort, that there was a Comforter coming to them, that would not move from them, but abide with them for ever; one that would be still at hand, and ever ready to support and comfort them: not like the miserable Comforters of this World, that can afford no Relief, and are most apt to leave us when we stand in most need of them; but a permanent, true, and constant Friend, whose Joys and Consolations will never fail: but evermore *in the midst of all the Sorrows that are in our Hearts, his Comforts shall refresh our Souls.*

But who or what is this constant and abiding Comforter? Why that the next words tell us, it is *the Spirit of Truth*, or the Holy Spirit of God, that leads into all, and nothing but Truth: 'tis the Holy Ghost, that descended on this day upon the heads of the Apostles, in the *form of Fire*, to enlighten them with Knowledg, and inflame them with Zeal; in the *shape of Tongues*, to enable them to speak boldly the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; and in the shape of *cloven Tongues*, to enable them to teach all Nations in their several Tongues and Languages. This is the Paraclete or Comforter, that was to come and stay with us always, when Christ was gone: for Christ's abode here was as in a *Tabernacle*, ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν. Now a Tabernacle, you know, is movable and of no continuance; but the Holy Ghost's abode is as in a *Temple*, which is permanent, and never to be taken down.

This Spirit of Truth (as our Saviour adds) *the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him:* that is, carnal and earthly-minded Men, whose Eyes are fix'd only on the visible Poms and Pleasures of the World, cannot perceive or know this Holy Spirit; *The natural or sensual Man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God,*
neither

neither can he (saith the Apostle) *because they are spiritually discern'd.* These spiritual things are invisible to a carnal Eye, and they that live and walk by Sight only, cannot behold or frame any Notion of them.

But ye know him (saith Christ to his Disciples) *for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* You are enabled by an Eye of Faith to discern and know him, and to feel his invisible Comforts and Operations; for he shall abide with you, and take up his Residence in you. Tho the World hath no Knowledg or Experience of these things, yet, by partaking of his sanctifying Graces, you shall have a true Sense and Conviction of them: And therefore be of good cheer, *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you;* you shall not be left destitute, as Orphans bereft of Parents and Guardians, that have none to help or take care of them; for I will come to you by the Presence of my Spirit, and that shall be an assur'd Pledg of my Return to you, to your everlasting Joy and Comfort. For *in a little while* (as he goes on to tell them) *the World shall see me no more;* for I shall be taken up from this Earth, where Mens bodily Eyes will not be able to follow or behold me any more; *but ye see me,* by the Eye of Faith and heavenly Meditation: and because I then live in the Regions of Blis and Glory, ye also, by my Conquest over Death and Hell, shall arrive thither too, and live for ever with me. And *at that Day* (saith he) *ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you;* that is, you shall then, by the means of this Holy Spirit, plainly see and know the close and entire Union that is between the Father and me, and likewise between me and you, and all the Members of my mystical Body; that as I and my Father are one, so ye also shall be one in us, and so shall all live together in one entire Fellowship and Communion with each other.

And now our Blessed Saviour, having thus set forth the inestimable Gift of sending the Holy Ghost, together with the great and invaluable Benefits and Blessings that ensue thereupon; he resumes his former Argument, and returns to the Condition upon which this Holy Spirit is promis'd and bestow'd: and that is, the Condition of loving him, together with the best Proof and Demonstration thereof, which is the keeping of his Commandments; saying in the next Verse, *He that hath my Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest my self*

to him. Where, as the loving of Christ is the Condition of his giving the Holy Ghost, so the keeping of his Commandments is made the most infallible Sign and Token of our loving of him: for 'tis not he that speaks me fair, and cries Lord, Lord; but he that observes my Sayings, and makes my Precepts the Rule and Guide of his Actions; he it is that truly loveth me. And to encourage us so to do, he tells us, that God the Father will love those that thus express their Love to his Son; and Christ himself will requite their Love to him with the blessed Fruits and Effects of his Love to them: for he will freely acquaint them with the Secrets of his Heart, and manifest himself and his Goodness to them.

Upon this Discourse of our Saviour's, *Judas, not Iscariot,* but one of his Disciples, *said unto him, Lord! how is it that thou wilt manifest thy self to us, and not unto the World?* where he seems desirous to know the reason why he so freely reveal'd his Mind to them, and not unto others. To which our Saviour gives him no direct Answer, but intimates the Reason of it to be, because the World neither lov'd his Person, nor obey'd his Precepts; for if they did, he would as freely communicate himself to the World as to them: 'tis their Sin and their Disobedience that make them hate me, and that withholds good things from them. *If a Man love me (saith Christ) he will keep my Words:* And then, *My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him:* whereas, on the other hand, *He that loveth me not, keepeth not my Sayings.* And the Evil thereof is the more heinous and dangerous, because *the Word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's that sent me.* The Message I deliver to the World is from him; and if that be despis'd, there can be no hopes of Mercy, but a fearful Expectation of Vengeance. *These things (saith he) have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you; that is, I was willing to let you know these things before I leave you, that you may remember and consider them when I am gone.* Howbeit, soon after my Departure the Paraclete, or Comforter, will come; that is, *the Holy Ghost, which my Father will send in my Name,* as he did this Day: and he at his Coming shall more fully instruct you in these and all other Matters; for *he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* Where, by teaching all things, and leading into all Truth, we must not understand indefinitely all things,

or all Truths of every kind, but only all Divine Truths necessary to be known in order to Salvation: and in these the Holy Ghost hath not been wanting either to the Apostles or us; having imparted to both the whole Mind and Will of God, so far as is necessary to bring us to him: which, as it is an inestimable Favour, so is it no more than is needful for us; for we of our selves are naturally blind and ignorant, and know nothing as we ought to know. 'Tis the Holy Spirit of God that enlightens our Minds, helps our Infirmities, and guides us in the Way that we should go; without which we should stumble and fall at Noon-day, and wander in the Paths of Destruction. But thanks be to God, who hath given us of his Spirit, to direct our Footsteps, and lead us in the Way to everlasting Life.

Again, The Holy Ghost is said to *bring all things to our Remembrance, whatsoever our Saviour hath said unto us*; and this too is but needful, for we are too apt to forget what we are most concern'd to remember. Our Memories are treacherous and unfaithful, and, like Water, are wont to keep up light and trivial things, and suffer weightier Matters to sink into Oblivion; and therefore the best of us stand in need of a Monitor, or Remembrancer, to call to mind those saving Truths that are apt to slip from us, and to fasten them upon us by a frequent and seasonable Recollection. This Office the Holy Ghost still does for us, by secretly moving and inciting us to our Duty, when we are turning from it; by suggesting Motives of Consolation in Trouble, when we are like to faint under it; and in a word, by calling to mind and applying Passages of Holy Scripture for our Comfort and Direction, when we stand in need of it: which shews us the great Use and Benefit of this Comforter.

And now our Saviour Christ, having thus fully declar'd his Mind to the Disciples, and promis'd them another Comforter to supply his Place, he begins to take his leave of them, saying in the next Verse, *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you, not as the World giveth, give I unto you, &c.* This giving or wishing of Peace was a Form of Salutation, antiently us'd at the departing of Friends, and implies a Wish of all kind of Happiness; Peace including in it all manner of Blessings: And this he twice repeats, to shew the Heartiness and Sincerity of his Wish; *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you, not as the World giveth,*

giveth : for they do it only formally and heartlessly, with an outward Show of Civility, but without any inward Truth or Sincerity ; but I give it to you after another and better manner ; that is, cordially, and with the highest Degrees of Love and Affection : I bequeath it to you as a Legacy, to stand or remain with you. Or else, *not as the World giveth, give I unto you*, may be meant, because the World cannot give that Peace that it wishes ; it can only desire, but cannot perform it : but I give it unto you with a design of doing it, and will effectually perform it for you ; and therefore *let not your Heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid* : be not griev'd at my departing from you, nor be afraid of what may befall you when I am gone, for the Comforter will come, and do all that for you which you can reasonably desire, or your Necessities call for : so that your *hearing of what I said unto you, I go away and come again to you*, can be no just cause of mourning or repining ; yea, *If you loved me* (said he) *you would rejoice rather, because I said, I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I* ; for greater is he that sendeth, than he that is sent ; and my going to him will be for mine and your Advancement. *This I have told you* (saith he) *before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe, and strengthen your Faith in me*. I shall add no more (saith he) but to let you know, *That the Prince of the World, or the Accuser of the Brethren, comes and findeth nothing in me, or hath nothing to lay to my Charge ; but that the World may know that I love the Father, I have fulfilled his Will, and as the Father gave me Commandment, even so do I*.

This is the whole Sense and Substance of the Gospel for this Day ; from which I shall infer two or three things by way of Application. As,

1st, Since Love is the Condition of Christ's giving us the Holy Ghost, let us labour to work our Hearts to the Love of God and Christ ; for both concur in conferring upon us this inestimable Gift, and therefore we must extend our Love to both. God the Father *so loved the World, that he gave his only Son* to ransom and redeem it ; and God the Son *so loved the World, that he gave his Holy Spirit* to sanctify and comfort it ; the Sense whereof ought to inflame our Hearts with the most ardent Love and Affection to both.

2dly, Since the best Token and Trial of our Love to Christ, is the keeping his Commandments, let us give him

that Testimony or Demonstration of our true Affection to him: one eminent Act or Expression of Love to another, is the doing of things grateful and well-pleasing to him, either by promoting his Good, or gratifying his Desires. Now because God is above the receiving any Good from us, our only way of doing things grateful and acceptable to him, is the observing his Commands, and doing what he requires of us: This our Saviour looks upon as the chief, if not the only Expression of our Love to him, as may be seen thro'out this Chapter. Let us not then fail of giving him this Proof and Demonstration of our Affection; and as we are bid to shew our Faith, so let us show our Love by our Works, ever obeying and submitting to his Will, by doing and suffering what he would have us.

3dly, Since the Holy Ghost is sent to us as a Comforter, Teacher and Remembrancer, let us thankfully receive and comply with him in all those Offices; that is, first, let us not refuse, but chearfully receive his Holy Comforts, that we may be encourag'd by his Joys, and supported by his Consolations. Next, let us beware of stifling and suppressing his good Motions, or turning the deaf Ear to his Calls, whether publickly or secretly suggested to us. Again, let us take heed of smothering the Gifts or Graces of the Spirit vouchsafed to us, but rather daily exercise and improve them; and then *to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly.* In short, let us not quench the Holy Spirit, that came in the Form of Fire to chear and enliven us, lest he come again in flaming Fire to consume and destroy us; nor let us refuse to hear him speaking to us, who came in the Shape of Tongues to teach and instruct us, lest those Tongues open again to accuse and condemn us. The Spirit of God will not always strive with us; and therefore let us beware of resisting, grieving, or doing despite to the Spirit of Grace, which alone can bring us to Glory: To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, &c.

D I S-



DISCOURSE VII.

The GOSPEL for *Monday* in *Whitsun-Week*.

St. John iii. 16 — 22.

God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life: for God sent not his Son into the World to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be saved, &c.

THE Epistle for this Day being the same with that for *Easter-Monday*, where it hath been already handled, I shall not here repeat it, but refer the Reader to it. Only in the Close is added an Account of the Holy Ghost's Descent on the Gentiles; for which reason it is appointed to be read again on this Day: for while St. Peter was speaking to them, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word, either by some visible Appearance, as it did on the Apostles; or by some Effects of it, which they heard or saw: at which the Jews, who had receiv'd the Gospel, marvel'd and magnify'd God, because on the Gentiles also was poured out the Gift of the Holy Ghost; for they heard them speak with Tongues, and magnify God in the several Languages of other Nations. Whereupon St. Peter declar'd their Right to Baptism, and none could forbid Water, that they should not be baptized, who had equally receiv'd the Holy Ghost with themselves; and therefore St. Peter commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord, and to be receiv'd into the Congregation of Christ's Flock; and so was departing from them, had they not pray'd him to tarry certain Days.

The Gospel for this Day, of which I am now to speak, contains,

First, The greatest Instance of the Divine Love, that was ever shew'd to the Sons of Men; and that was, *God's giving them his only-begotten Son.*

Secondly, The End or Design of God's giving him; and that was, that Mankind *should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

Thirdly, The Persons for whom he was given, and the Conditions upon which they are to receive Benefit by him; and that is Faith, or believing in him: *Whosoever believeth, &c.*

Fourthly, The Danger of rejecting and disbelieving of him, which will inevitably bring upon them Shame and Condemnation; *And this is the Condemnation, &c.* Of these things something particularly. And,

First, Of the great and unparallel'd Instance of the Divine Love unto Mankind, in giving them his Son, in these words, *God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son*: This was the highest Instance of Love that could be shewn, or the noblest Testimony of Affection that could possibly be given. And that will appear, by considering,

1st, The Greatness of the Person loving us.

2dly, The Vileness of the Persons beloved.

3dly, The Manner of loving them. And,

4thly, The Gift by which it is express'd.

1st, For the Person here said to love us; 'tis *God blessed for ever*, who was infinitely happy in himself, in the Contemplation of his own Excellencies and Perfections, and needed nothing of the Complacence or Concurrence of his Creatures to add to or compleat his Happiness.

2dly, For the Persons beloved; 'tis here said to be the World, *God so loved the World*, that is, Mankind, the principal Inhabitants and Governours of the World, who, by their Revolt from their Maker, had brought such a heavy Load of Miseries upon themselves and their Posterity, as they were neither able to bear, or to remove. Their Disobedience to God's Command entail'd Death and Damnation upon all Men, and the whole Creation groan'd under the Weight of their Transgression. They who were made but little lower than the Angels, are sunk by their Sins, and become worse than the Beast that perisheth, being Enemies unto God by evil Works, yea, Rebels and Traitors against him, and so liable to his Justice, and under the Sentence of
eternal

eternal Death. In this their sad and deplorable Condition God Almighty was pleas'd to cast an eye of Pity and Compassion upon them, and to contrive a way to help them out of this Misery, which they could never do of themselves. These worthless and sinful Sons of *Adam* are the Objects of this Divine Love.

3dly, For the Manner of loving them, the Apostle seems here to labour, and to be at a loss how to set it forth, saying, God *so* loved the World, *so* wonderfully, *so* intensely, *so* undeservedly, *so* unconceivably, that he knew not how to express it, but by Extasy and Admiration; which made another Apostle, in taking the Dimensions of it, to cry out, *O the Height and Depth, the Length and Breadth of the Love of God, that passeth Knowledge!* where he seems to be swallow'd up with Wonder and Astonishment at the Greatness and Freeness of this Divine Love: Which will farther appear, by considering,

4thly, The Greatness of the Gift, which he hath bestow'd and express'd his Love by; and that was, in *giving his own only-begotten and beloved Son*: He gave not (as one hath observ'd) a Creature, or a Servant, or a Prophet, or an Angel, which might have been all Tokens of Respect; but he hath gone higher, and given us his Son, and that not a common or ordinary Son, but his only Son, his only-begotten Son, whom he gave to take our Nature and Guilt upon him; and by that gave him up to Death, a cruel and accursed Death, the just Punishment of it: which is an Instance of the biggest Affection that can reside in any Breast. *Abraham's* yielding up his only Son *Isaac* to be sacrific'd at God's Call, was an Instance of his great Love, as well as of his Faith and Obedience to his Maker: but that comes infinitely short of the Love of God, in yielding up his only-begotten Son to death for us.

Secondly, But what was the End or Design of God's giving us his only-begotten Son? Why that (as we are here told) was, that Mankind *should not perish, but have everlasting Life*: without this Gift all Mankind must have perish'd everlastingly; for *there is no other Name given under Heaven, whereby we can be saved, than the Name of our Lord Jesus*, Acts 6. This Son of God was pleas'd to humble himself not only to the Nature of Man, but to *the Form of a Servant*, merely to serve us; and *became obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross*, to make an Atonement for our

Sins, to rescue us from the Power of the Devil, and to reconcile us unto God: which things we could not do for ourselves; for where there is no Sacrifice or Satisfaction for Sin, there is no Salvation. Nothing then remains but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to be poured out upon us; and without that Sacrifice we must have for ever suffer'd, because we could never satisfy. But now Christ hath redeem'd us from all Iniquity, and given his Life a Ransom for all, whereby he hath not only secur'd us from perishing, but procur'd for us everlasting Life. In short, the End of Christ's Coming was not to destroy, but to save: for so the

Next words tell us, that *God sent not his Son into the World to condemn the World, but that the World thro him might be saved.* This was the primary Design of his Mission, not to condemn the World, but to rescue it from Condemnation; tho, by reason of Mens rejecting of him, that which was intended for their rising, becomes accidentally an occasion of falling. So *Simeon's Prophecy* foretold of him, that *the Child Jesus was set for the Fall as well as the Rising again of many in Israel, and for a Sign that shall be spoken against,* Luke 2. 34. And this will lead me, in the next place, to enquire,

Thirdly, Whether this Son of God was given up to death for all Men, or only for some particular Persons under particular Conditions and Qualifications; and if so, who and what they are.

In answer to which, I say, (1.) That Christ's Death and Satisfaction is sufficient for all Men. The Greatness and Dignity of his Person put an infinite Value and Merit into his Sufferings, and that render'd it a sufficient Price and Compensation for the Sins of all Mankind. Hence he was usher'd in by *St. John, as the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World:* where the Love of God, in sending his Son for our Redemption, is extended to all; which is more expressly deliver'd in *1 John 2. 1, 2. If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for ours only, but for the Sins of the whole World.* And *St. Paul* teaches us, that *Christ gave himself a Ransom for all,* *1 Tim. 2. 6.* meaning, that he had laid down a sufficient Price to redeem and ransom them all, whereby they were deliver'd from a Necessity of perishing, and put in the way of eternal Happiness and Salvation. *He tasted Death for every Man,* saith the

the Author to the *Hebrews*, Chap. 2. 9. And *this is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Men to be receiv'd, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners*, 1 Tim. 1. 15. where, if Sinners are not excluded from Mercy, we may be well assur'd that the Tender of this Salvation extends to all. But,

(2.) Tho the Merits and Virtue of Christ's Death and Satisfaction be sufficient for, yet they are not effectual to all Men: for there are many thousands perish everlastingly, notwithstanding this Propitiation; and more fall into the Gulph of Perdition, than escape it. But yet this proceeds not from any Defect or Imperfection in the Sacrifice, nor from any want of Love or Readiness in our Saviour to confer the Benefit and Efficacy of it; but from Mens being wanting to themselves, in not considering or observing the Terms upon which it is tender'd to them. And here we must note,

(3.) That the Promises of Redemption and Salvation by Jesus Christ are not absolute, but conditional; they are made and perform'd only upon the Conditions of Faith and Repentance, and none but such as observe those Terms and Conditions can reap any Advantage from them. We must die unto Sin, before his dying for Sin can be of any avail to us; for he came to *save his People from their Sins*, not to make them secure in them. *He gave himself for them, to redeem them from all Iniquity*, not to allow them in any; and to *purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*. 'Tis *whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting Life*: where Faith is made the Condition of the Promise; and we must *believe*, that is, receive his Doctrine, and become his Disciples and Followers, if we expect to receive Life and Salvation from him. *He that believeth on him* (saith he) *is not condemned*; that is, is not condemn'd here by his own Conscience, but may find Peace, Ease and Rest to his Soul; nor shall be condemn'd hereafter, but shall be commended and acquitted at the last and great Day of Account, when he shall be rescu'd from eternal Death, and restor'd to eternal Life: for if our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence in God. *But he that believeth not, is condemned already*; that is, by his own Conscience, which stings and upbraids him here, and fills him with many Fears and Terrors for his Unbelief; and will be much more condemn'd hereafter, *because he hath not believed in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God, but hath refus'd the only*
Remedy

58 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on

Remedy vouchsafed him by the Son of God, the only Saviour of the World: *And if our Hearts condemn us for it already, God, who is greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all things, will surely bring upon us a greater Condemnation.*
1 John 3. 20, 21.

And having mention'd this future and eternal Condemnation, the Apostle gives us in the next words some account of the Ground and Cause of it, saying, *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil:* Where this Condemnation is aggravated,

1st, From the Greatness of the Blessing vouchsafed, that *Light is come into the World.*

2dly, From the Ingratitude or bad Use that is made of it; *Men love Darknes rather than Light.* And,

3dly, From the Ground and Reason here given for their so doing; *Because their Deeds are evil.* All which must mightily enhance the Guilt, and aggravate their Condemnation. For the

1st, By the Light's coming into the World, is meant the Son of God's appearing in it, to reveal the Mind and Will of his Father for the Salvation of Mankind; who is therefore stil'd, *The Light of the World, or the Light that lightens every one that cometh into the World;* John 1. 9. The Prophet *Malachi*, before his Appearance, call'd him, *The Sun of Righteousness*, who was shortly to *arise with Healing in his Wings:* Which Prophecy St. *Luke* tells us was fulfil'd, when this *Day-spring from on high visited us with his Salvation.* The World before his coming was wrapt in Clouds and thick Darknes; the Jews had but a very imperfect Knowledg of a Saviour, and the Gentiles had none at all, being *without God, without Christ, and so without Hope in the World.* But Christ at his Coming dispel'd this Darknes of Error and Ignorance, and scatter'd the bright Beams of Light and Knowledg over the benighted World: He shin'd by the Lustre of his Doctrine and Miracles to the ends of the Earth, and all Nations may now see the Salvation of God, for he hath brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel; he hath enlighten'd the World with the Knowledg of all necessary and Divine Truths, and thereby shew'd himself to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. By following his Doctrine we cannot err, and by treading the Steps of his Example we shall surely arrive to everlasting Life; so that we are not left in Ignorance of our Duty, but the Way
of

of Salvation is made plain before us, and *Light is come into the World.*

But 2dly, What use doth the World make of it? Why, such is the Folly and Ingratitude of most Men, as to *love Darknes rather than Light*, to prefer Error and Ignorance before the Knowledg of the Truth, and to chuse rather to walk on still in Darknes, than to tread the Path that leads to the Light of everlasting Life. Such as these wilfully shut their Eyes against the Light flashing in their Faces, and cast the Word of God behind their backs; saying with them in *Job, Depart from us, we desire not the Knowledg of thy Ways*, Chap. 21. 14. One would think the World should be transported with Joy at this great Light's coming into it; and that all Men should welcome this Sun of Righteousness: as 'tis reported some of the Northern People do the Sun, who wanting its Light for some Months, when it begins to peep out and rise to them, they all salute it with Joy and Exultation, crying out, *ἰδε ὁ ἥλιος, Behold the Sun!* In like manner, it might be expected, that the benighted World that had a long time lain in Darknes, and in the Shadow of Death, should rejoice at the Appearance of this Sun of Righteousness, meeting him with Acclamations of Joy, and saying, *ἰδε ὁ ἥλιος, Behold the Sun!* or with St. John, *ἰδε ὁ ἀμνος, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World!* But lo! the quite contrary, *He came unto his own* (that is, to the Jews, who were his own People, of his own Stock and Lineage) and yet *they receiv'd him not*, John 1. 11. Yea, they from whom he might expect the best Reception, were so far from receiving him, that they rejected his Person and despised his Doctrine; and instead of owning him as a Saviour, treated him as a Malefactor: They shut up this great Light of the World in the dark Lanthorn of the Grave; and eclips'd awhile this Sun of Righteousness. And tho he soon rose again, and breaking thro the Cloud, after shin'd the brighter; yet they still hated the Light, slighted his Instructions, and would have none of his Ways. And so do the Atheists, Deists, and many nominal Christians to this day.

But what is the Ground or Reason of this ill Carriage? Why, the Reason here given is, *Because their Deeds are evil: They love Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil.* The Course of Men's Lives have a strange and strong Influence upon their Belief and Opinion of things,

things, and evil Practices do very much corrupt and debauch good Principles. 'Tis obvious to observe, that good Men, who lead holy and vertuous Lives, easily believe the Truths of the Gospel, which they see tend so much to the Happiness of this Life and the next; they feel their Minds inclin'd to receive Christ as the Saviour of the World, and both desire and delight in the Knowledg of his Ways: they chuse Light rather than Darknes, and prefer Knowledg before Ignorance, and that because their Deeds are good: they labour to regulate their Practice by the Rule of God's Word, and instead of shutting their Eyes against the Light, they pray God to open them, that they may more clearly see the wonderful things of his Law. And thus an honest Mind leads them to the Knowledg of Divine Truths. Whereas bad Men, on the other hand, who lead loose and wicked Lives, do all they can to extinguish the Light of Truth, which shews them the Error and Danger of their Ways, and would stop their Career of Wickedness: for this reason they hate Knowledg, and endeavour to stifle and suppress the Light of it from shining into their Understandings, and that *because their Deeds are evil*. Their Works being contrary to God's Word, they care not to receive or hearken to what makes against them; but rather seek to put out that Light, which they have no mind to work or walk by. And therefore the Evangelist in the next words adds, that *every one that doth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd*. There are some Sins so foul, as to shun all Discovery, and to covet a black Veil of Darknes, to hide their Deformity. There are others attended with that Shame and Disgrace, as not to be able to bear the Light, and so are acted under Vizors and Disguises, to avoid the Reproach and Censures of the World. Again, there are others so full of Mischief and Danger both to Body, Soul, and Goods, that few care to own or be thought Actors of them. And generally all sorts of Sinners seek Secrecy, to conceal the Baseness and Obliquity of their Actions.

But he that doth truth, cometh to the Light, that his Deeds made be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. Where by Works of Truth are meant vertuous and good Works, done in conformity to God's Word, and the Rules of right Reason. Such Works do not decline, but desire the Light; they come to it to be made manifest, and rather court than fly Observation. For these being wrought in
God,

God, that is, according to his Will, and by the Direction of his Holy Spirit, have the Approbation of God and Conscience too: and the more they are expos'd to Light, the more Joy and Comfort do they bring to them that do them.

This is the Sense and Drift of this Day's Gospel; which shews us,

1. The infinite Love of God to Mankind, in giving his Son to be our Saviour; so as to admire, adore, and answer the Ends of it.

2. The great Danger of Ingratitude, and the Abuse of such Love; which defeats the Design, and deprives us of the Benefit of it, so as to abhor and avoid it.

3. The Honour and happy Issue of good and vertuous Actions, which will intitle us to the Salvation procur'd by it. All which are to be the Subject of this Day's Meditations, and the Practice of our whole Life: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE VIII.

The EPISTLE for Tuesday in Whitsun-Week.

Acts viii. 14——17.

When the Apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had receiv'd the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who when they were come down pray'd for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptiz'd in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their Hands upon them, and they receiv'd the Holy Ghost.

AFTER the Death of St. Stephen, there follow'd a great Persecution of the Church which was at Jerusalem; by means whereof, the Disciples that were there, were all scatter'd about throughout the Regions of Judea

Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles, who remain'd at *Jerusalem*. Among those that were scatter'd, *Philip* the Deacon went down to the City of *Samaria*, and preach'd Christ unto them. Where the People with one accord gave heed unto those things which *Philip* spake, hearing and seeing the Miracles done by him: for he dispossest'd evil and unclean Spirits, and many that were troubled with Palsies and Lameness were heal'd by him; which occasion'd great Joy in all the City. Now *Samaria* was a City or Country inhabited by Jews and Gentiles, and so they had a Medley or Mixture of Religions, partly Jewish, and partly Heathenish; for *they feared the Lord, and served their own Gods, after the manner of other Nations*; 2 Kings 17. 33. They mingled the Service of the true God with that of the false and heathen Gods, and blended their Worship with Idolatry. In our Saviour's time there was a great Controversy between the Jews and the *Samaritans*, about the Object and Place of Worship; of which we read, *John* 4. where our Saviour told the *Samaritans*, that *they worship'd they knew not what*, ver. 22. meaning, that they were Idolaters, and wanting the Knowledg of the true God, fell down to false and idol Gods; and such they continu'd, till *Philip* went down and preach'd to them, and by his Doctrine and Miracles convinc'd and converted them all to the Christian Faith: insomuch that they *believing what Philip preach'd concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ*, became Profelytes to the Gospel, and were baptized both Men and Women.

Now when the Apostles, who were at *Jerusalem*, heard that *Samaria* had receiv'd the Word of God, they sent unto them *Peter and John*: that is, hearing the good Success of *St. Philip's* Ministry at *Samaria*, by the Accession of so many Converts to Christianity, and knowing that *Philip* had gone so far with them as his Office of a Deacon would reach, namely, to teach and to baptize them; they thought fit to send down two of their own Company with the farther Power of Apostles, to do something more for them. The Persons sent were *St. Peter* and *St. John*, two of the prime Apostles; the one *the Apostle of the Circumcision*, the other *the Disciple whom Jesus loved*. But what was the End or Errand upon which they were sent? Why, that was partly to confirm the new Converts, and partly to ordain Elders and Pastors to instruct and govern them in the several Cities or Parts of the Country.

To which end, the next words tell us, that *when they were come down, they pray'd for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost*: which was the Prayer generally used at Confirmation and Ordination, and was here very seasonable and necessary; *For as yet the Holy Ghost was not fallen upon any of them, only they were baptiz'd in the Name of the Lord Jesus*: being perhaps as ignorant yet of the Holy Ghost, as the Disciples at *Ephesus*, who being ask'd by the Apostle, whether *they had receiv'd the Holy Ghost since they believ'd?* reply'd, that *they had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost*; having had no other than *John's Baptism*, which had no mention of the Holy Ghost, *Acts 19. 2, 3.* And therefore the Apostles both here and there pray'd, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: and when they had laid their Hands upon them, their Prayers were answer'd; and 'tis said here, that *they receiv'd the Holy Ghost*; and there, that *the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with Tongues, and prophesy'd.* So that from these words, which are principally meant of the laying on of Hands in Confirmation, reckon'd among the first Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, common to all Christians, *Heb. 6. 2.* I must treat,

First, Of the Nature, End, and Rise of this antient Rite of Confirmation.

Secondly, Of the Ceremony of laying on of Hands used in it.

Thirdly, Of the Persons by whom and to whom it is to be administer'd. And,

Fourthly, Of the Graces and Blessings that accompany and accrue from it.

And, *First, For the Nature of Confirmation, it is the ratifying or confirming of the Vow or Promise made in Baptism*: for when any are receiv'd into the Church by being baptiz'd, they solemnly promise to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and to continue stedfast in that Belief to their Lives end. And this in adult or grown Persons, who are instructed before they are baptiz'd, is done soon after Baptism; as it was in these *Samaritan* and *Ephesian Converts*. But in Children, who by the Mercy of Christ and the Charity of the Church are admitted to Baptism, and are receiv'd into the Church upon the Engagement of others, before they are capable of understanding

standing their Duty ; this is to be done after, when they come to Years of Discretion, to know and understand what others have undertaken and engag'd for their benefit, and in their behalf. And being taught and arriv'd to some competent Knowledg of these things, they are to renew and ratify those Promises in their own Persons, and take that upon themselves in their riper Years, which was by Sureties engag'd for them in their Infancy. And this is done at the time of Confirmation, so call'd from confirming the Baptismal Vow, and binding the Obligation of it more strongly upon them ; whereby baptiz'd Persons are confirm'd in their Duty, and more closely ty'd to the Observance of it.

This is no new, needless, or upstart Invention, as some have vainly objected ; but an antient, pious, and excellent Institution, tending much to the good Education and Salvation of Children receiv'd into the Church. It began in the Jewish Church, where, as *Buxtorf* and other Jewish Writers inform us, Children after they were circumcis'd the eighth Day, as soon as they were capable of Instruction, were to be taught the Letter of the Law, then the *Talmud* ; and when they arriv'd to some competent measure of Understanding in both, were to be publicly presented in the Congregation, where they solemnly oblig'd themselves to be *Filii Præcepti*, subject to the Law, and to keep the Sabbath, the Passover, and other Ceremonies of the Church : and thenceforward they were to answer for themselves, and their own Faults.

This pious and laudable Practice is from the Jewish deriv'd down and continu'd in the Christian Church to this day. We find it approv'd by our Saviour, who commanded the little Children to be brought to him, laying his Hands on them, and blessing them ; *Mark 10*. 'Twas practis'd by the Apostles in the several places where they went, and is come down to us thro the several Ages and Centuries of the Church.

Now this Rite of Confirmation was ever accompany'd with Prayer and the Imposition of Hands ; both which are here mention'd.

(1.) I say, it was attended with Prayer : so did *Peter* and *John* for these Disciples of *Samaria*, who when they came down, pray'd for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. This is the ordinary means of conveying Divine Grace,

Grace, and is appointed by God for his conferring of the Holy Ghost, and by it of spiritual Strength sufficient to perform the Baptismal Vow. By this we call in the Aid and Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to supply the Defects of our Weakness, and to enable us to do that by the help of his Grace, which we cannot do for our selves. To which end, Prayer was ever attended in this Ordinance,

(2.) With laying on of Hands, and blessing those upon whom they were laid. This did *Peter* and *John* here with good effect, for *they laid their Hands on them, and they receiv'd the Holy Ghost.* So did *Paul* to the Disciples at *Ephesus*; *He laid his Hands upon them, and the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with Tongues and prophesy'd*; Acts 19. 6. Indeed, laying on of Hands is one of the most antient Ceremonies used in Blessing the People. 'Twas used by *Jacob* in blessing his Sons, Gen. 48. 14, 15. where we find him *laying his Hands on Ephraim, Manasseh, and Joseph*; and with that imploring a blessing upon them. From his Example it was after follow'd and observ'd by the Jews in all their solemn Benedictions. Thus we find it used in consecrating the *Levites*, whom *Aaron*, after *laying on of Hands*, offer'd unto the Lord; Numb. 8. 10, 11. Moreover, God directed *Moses* in blessing *Joshua*, to lay his Hands upon him, and thereby make him his Successor; Numb. 27. 18. From hence this Custom descended to the Christian Church; for our Saviour, in compliance with this antient Usage, *laid on his Hands in blessing the Children that were brought to him.* And his Apostles and their Successors have, by the Imposition of Hands and Prayer, confirm'd Converts, and ordain'd Elders ever since. And this will lead me to consider,

Thirdly, The Persons who are to administer this sacred Rite, and likewise those to whom it is to be administer'd.

For the first, the Persons by whom Confirmation is to be administer'd; they from the beginning have been the prime Pastors and Governours of the Church. Among the Jews (as *Buxtorf* tells us) they who in their younger Years had learnt the Law, were brought into the holy Assembly, where Prayers were made over them, with the Imposition of the Hands of the High-Priest: which Office was perform'd by the highest Order of Priests under that Dispensation.

In the New Testament we find Confirmation confin'd to the Apostles, who were an Order by Christ's Appointment

superiour to and distinct from the Seventy Disciples, and could do some things with Authority in the Church, which the others could not.

Hence we find in this Gospel for the Day, that when *Samaritania* had receiv'd the Word of God, and were baptiz'd by *Philip*; *Peter* and *John*, two of the Apostles, were sent to administer Confirmation to them: which was an Act peculiar to the chief Rulers of the Church, and not allow'd to inferiour Officers. For tho *Philip* could baptize, yet he could not confirm; yea, tho he had many miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet that did not qualify him for this Office, which belong'd only to the Apostles. In compliance with this Apostolick Practice and Pattern, the Christian Church hath ever reserv'd the Honour of dispensing this holy Rite to their Successors the Bishops. This we find attested by the Fathers with one consent.

St. Ambrose tells us, that to preserve the Unity and Authority of the Church, *Confirmatio a solis Episcopis fieri solet*, Confirmation is wont to be perform'd only by the Bishops.

To the same purpose speaks *St. Jerom*, *Non nisi per manus Episcopi, &c.* By the Hands of the Bishops only was Confirmation administer'd. Which was a Matter of Fact so well known and attested through all the Ages of the Church, that *Calvin* himself plainly declares it to be the antient Practice, that Children of Christian Parents being first taught, *coram Episcopo fisterentur*, should be brought to the Bishop to be confirm'd. And other of the wisest Presbyterians, overcome by the Evidence of this Truth, have frankly acknowledg'd the same. By all which it manifestly appears, that this Office of Confirmation hath been ever assign'd to the Bishops or prime Rulers of the Church, even as it continues with us to this day: and with good reason too, their Blessing being apt to be receiv'd with greater Veneration, and to beget a higher Authority and Esteem for this Sacred Rite, as also to make the People expect better Effects from that Office, which none but the highest Ministers of Religion are impower'd to perform. Thus we see the Persons authoriz'd to administer this Ordinance.

Let us next consider the Persons to whom it is to be administer'd; and they are, all baptiz'd Persons competently instructed in the Principles of Religion. So that the Qualifications of Persons to be confirm'd, are Baptism and competent Instruction, For

For the first, none are capable of the Benefit of Confirmation, but such as have been before baptiz'd; for Persons must be first receiv'd into the Church, before they can receive the Blessings promis'd and bestow'd after it. And therefore these *Samaritans* were first baptiz'd by *Philip* the Deacon, before they were confirm'd by *Peter* and *John* the Apostles. And the Disciples at *Ephesus* were baptiz'd in the Name of the Lord Jesus, before *Paul* laid his Hands on them to bless and confirm them. And our Church, by the Warrant of these Examples, acts accordingly.

But because the Charity of the Church hath ever extended to Infants, upon the Promises of Sureties undertaking for them, and Children both under the Law and the Gospel have been receiv'd into the Covenant before they understand the Nature, End, or Obligations of it; therefore, secondly, Instruction must always go before Confirmation: that Children may be taught, as soon as they are able to learn, what a solemn Vow, Promise, and Profession hath been made by others in their Name, to fit them to renew and ratify in their own Persons the Engagement of Sureties in their behalf; and to enable them to know and take upon themselves the Obligation of what, when they come to Age, they stand bound to perform. Which shews us the Usefulness and Necessity of Catechizing, to prepare Children for Confirmation, and to receive the Benefits convey'd by it: which is

The last thing propounded to be spoken to, viz. the Graces and Blessings confer'd in and convey'd by this Rite of Confirmation: And they are held forth here by receiving the Holy Ghost; *Then laid they their Hands upon them, and they receiv'd the Holy Ghost.* Where by receiving the Holy Ghost, is meant the Participation of the Gifts and Graces of God's Holy Spirit, which are the greatest Blessings that ever were or can be imparted to the Sons of Men.

As for the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, they are either extraordinary and miraculous, as the Gift of Tongues, of Miracles and Prophecy, and the like; which were given to the Apostles and others in the beginning of Christianity, for the planting and propagating of the Gospel, as we read, *Acts* 2. 1, 2, &c. and *Chap.* 19. 6. & *1 Cor.* 12. Or common and ordinary, as the acquir'd Knowledg of the Tongues, the Improvements in Learning, Skill in the Arts and Sciences, and the like; which come from the same Spirit,

tho not in the same extraordinary way : the former by sudden Infusion, the latter by the Methods of Study and Diligence. And tho the former ceas'd with the Reason of them, yet the latter being of standing Use in the Church, will be continu'd to the world's end.

But besides the Gifts, the Graces of the Spirit are by Prayer and Imposition of Hands confer'd in Confirmation. This the Fathers generally affirm : *By Prayer and laying on of Hands* (saith St. Cyprian) *they that are baptiz'd receive the Holy Ghost. The Flesh is seal'd by Imposition of Hands* (saith Tertullian) *that the Soul may be illuminated by the Spirit.* We read in Scripture of a *Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, a Spirit of Counsel and Might, a Spirit of Knowledg and of the Fear of the Lord.* All which, in the Office of Confirmation, we are directed to pray for ; and by a due and devout Use of this Ordinance will be granted and bestow'd upon us. By this we shall be enabled to perform our Baptismal Vow, to have spiritual Strength enough to resist and conquer our ghostly Enemies : for *his Grace will be sufficient for us,* to vanquish Satan, overcome the World, and subdue the Flesh, the Enemies we renounc'd in Baptism ; which, without the Help of Divine Grace, will be too hard for the best of us.

Wherefore let all good Christians have a high Esteem and Value for this Sacred Rite of Confirmation, by which we receive the Holy Ghost to all the Ends and Purposes of Religion. Let none run to it merely for Company, or for Fashion's sake, but reverently observe it as a Means of Grace, and a Step to Glory. Let it not be neglected either by those that are to give, or those that are to receive it. But let the former be ready duly to administer it, and the other to be carefully brought to it ; considering how much it tends to the advancing of Knowledg, and increas'ing of Piety in the World. Let all Parents, who tender the Welfare of their Children, take care by catechizing and instructing of them to fit and prepare them for this Office, and be as mindful of the Good of their Souls, as they are wont to be of their Bodies. Let all Sureties and Undertakers for Children, who stand bound to see them taught in the Principles of Religion, and brought to Confirmation, take care that this be effectually done, to release themselves of the Obligation ; which else will lie heavy upon them, and swell their Accounts by the Violation of such solemn Engagements.

In a word, let us all endeavour to preserve this antient, pious, and laudable Institution of the Church, and to answer the End, that we may receive the Benefit of it, which is to fit us for the Holy Sacrament, and Fellowship of Christians here upon Earth, and to prepare us for the Communion of Saints hereafter in Heaven: Which God grant, for the Merits of Christ, &c.



DISCOURSE IX.

The GOSPEL for Tuesday in Whitsun-Week.

St. John x. 1—11.

Verily, verily I say unto you, He that entreth not by the Door into the Sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a Thief and a Robber. But he that cometh in by the Door, is the Shepherd of the Sheep; to him the Porter openeth, and the Sheep hear his Voice, &c.

IN this Gospel for the Day, St. John brings in our Saviour by a Parable of the Shepherd and the Sheep, proving himself the true Messias, and his Ministers the true Messengers of God; and that all other Pretenders to either, are no better than Cheats and Impostors. For the better clearing whereof, I shall consider the Parable both in the Literal and Mystical Sense, and shew our Saviour's Drift and Design in it with relation to himself, and his Ministers sent by him.

The Parable is usher'd in with the Term of Asseveration, *Verily*, to signify the undoubted Truth and Certainty of it; which Term is doubled, *Verily, verily I say unto you*, to signify moreover the exceeding great Weight and Importance of what comes after it. And having thus prepar'd the way to gain Attention and Reception to what follows, he enters upon the Parable; which begins,

First, With the Character or Account of a false Shepherd, saying, *He that entreth not by the Door into the Sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a Thief and a Robber.* This, in the literal Sense, is known, and will be acknowledged by all Men to be true; for he that is the Owner of Sheep, or the Shepherd to whom the Care of them is committed, is wont (you know) oftentimes to shut them up in the Fold, and to lock the Door, to keep them from breaking out, or going astray, and so from the danger of being lost. Now if any come in the Evening, or by Night, and enters the Sheepfold not by the Door, which he finds lock'd for the Security of the Sheep, he cannot be a true Shepherd; and if he climbs up some other way, to be sure he hath some bad design upon the Sheep, and is no better than a Thief and a Robber. The mystical Sense or Design of these Words is to detect false Christs, and false Teachers, and to discover the Falshood of their Ways and Pretences. As,

1st, He that pretends to come as the promised Messias, or Saviour of the World, and comes not as he ought, in the way and manner in which he was promis'd; that is, brings not a Commission from God, attested by a Power of working Miracles; such a one comes not in by the Door, or right way of Entrance, but climbs up some other way by the Steps of Ambition and Avarice, and is no better than a Lyar and Impostor, who seeks to deceive and destroy those that follow him. Such a one was *Theudas*, mention'd in the Acts of the Apostles, who boasted himself to be somebody, that is, a Person sent by God to relieve and advance those that came to him, which drew a Number of Men, about four hundred, after him; but doing nothing to shew his Power or Commission from God, he was seiz'd and slain for an Impostor, his Followers were all scattered, and the whole Design brought to nought, Acts 5. Such another was *Judas of Galilee*, who in the Days of the taxing, and enrolling the People, drew away many after him; but he also perished, and all that obey'd him were dispers'd, as we read in the same Chapter.

Again, 2^{dly}, He that pretends to be a Minister of Christ, and takes upon him the Office of publick Teaching, and comes not in by the Door of Ordination, or a lawful Call, but climbs up or intrudes into it some other way, taking his Honour upon him without being called, as was Aaron; such a one too is no better than a Thief and a Robber, especially

especially if he thrusts himself into another's Charge, and pretends to instruct the People committed to him without or against the Consent of the lawful Pastor: he is a spiritual Sheep-stealer, or Church-robber, that divides and makes a Prey of another's Flock, and does but seduce and ruin those that follow him.

And having given the Character of false Christs, and false Teachers, he next gives an account of the true Messias, and the true Ministers or Messengers sent by him, in these words; *But he that entereth in by the Door, is the Shepherd of the Sheep*: which, in the literal Sense, signifies, that he who is the right Owner or Master of the Sheep, or the Shepherd appointed by him to oversee them, he hath the Key of the Sheepfold, and enters into it by the Door, and so goes in like a good Shepherd with no other design than to feed and preserve the Flock.

In the mystical Sense it teaches us, (1.) The Character and Proof of the true Messias; he that comes in by the Door of Prophecy, and brings with him the Seal of Miracles to testify that he is sent from God, by fulfilling of Prophecies, and doing things that are above the Reach and Activity of all human Power, is to be receiv'd as a Divine Person, and to be own'd for the true Messiah, or *the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls*. And by this our Saviour prov'd and demonstrated the Truth of his Mission and Messiahship; saying in the following part of this Chapter, *The Works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear witness of me*, ver. 25. & ver. 37, 38. *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, tho ye believe not me, believe the Works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him*: meaning, that the Works wrought by him made it evident, that the Father acted in and by him, and that all that he did was by his Power and Commission. Which things so convinc'd *Nicodemus*, a Ruler of the Jews, that he confess'd him to be the Messias, or *Teacher come from God, for none could do the Works that he did, except God were with him*; John 3. 2. And a great Multitude of People, upon the sight of the Miracle of the Loaves, said, *Of a truth this is that Prophet that should come into the World*. Chap. 6. 14.

Moreover, (2.) These words teach us the Character and Qualifications of the true Ministers and Messengers of Christ; *He that entreth in by the Door of Ordination, and*

is lawfully call'd by those that have Authority to invest and set him apart for the Office of teaching, he is a true Pastor or Minister of Christ: *How shall they preach* (saith the Apostle) *except they be sent?* signifying it to be absurd and presumptuous to run before they are sent, and to venture upon that Office, before they are duly call'd and authoriz'd to undertake it; whereas they who were sent by Christ, as the Apostles were, and they who are sent by them, to whom he gave a Commission to send others, as his Father sent him, are the true *Shepherds of the Sheep*, and have full Authority to feed and guide the Flock of Christ, and to have power over them.

To them (as the Parable goes on) *the Porter openeth, and the Sheep hear his Voice, and he calleth his own Sheep by name, and leadeth them out*; where the Porter is generally understood of Christ, who after calls himself *the Door*, and *the great Shepherd of the Sheep*, and here *the Porter*, to open the Door of the Fold for his Sheep to enter in, and likewise to guard it from Thieves, and Wolves in Sheep's Clothing, that they may not enter in and devour the Flock. *And the Sheep hear his Voice*, that is, all humble, faithful and good Christians, which are Christ's Flock, obey his Call, and receive his Word. *And he calleth his own Sheep by name*: This alludes to the Custom of Shepherds in those Countries, who were so conversant among their Cattle, that they knew them severally, and had a particular Name for each of them, by which they distinguish'd and call'd them; and the Sheep, by often hearing it severally call'd upon them, knew it, and answer'd each to their Call: suitable hereunto our Saviour says, ver. 14. *I am the good Shepherd, and know my Sheep, and am known of mine*: and ver. 27. *My Sheep hear my Voice, and I know them, and they follow me*; they hearken to the Voice of my Precepts, and as I distinguish them from others, so do they by becoming my Followers: all which is agreeable to that of the Apostle, *The Foundation of the Lord standeth sure, the Lord knoweth who are his*. 2 Tim. 2. 19.

But to go on with the Parable; when the Shepherd *leadeth out the Sheep, and brings them forth, to the Water or Pasture, he goeth before them, and the Sheep follow him, for they know his Voice*. Here again is a Reference to the Custom of Shepherds in Jewry, where the feeding of Cattle was their main Trade and Business; and with them the Practice was for the Shepherd to lead and go before, and, by

by the Arts of Speech or Words, to call the Sheep after them : whereas Shepherds now go after and drive the Sheep before them ; such Customs being different in divers Countries. Of the Custom of leading or going before the Sheep in antient times, we have many Hints in Holy Scripture : *David*, who was himself taken from the Sheepfold, styles God his Shepherd, and speaks of him as feeding his Sheep in a green Pasture, and leading them forth beside the Waters of Comfort, Psal. 23. 1, 2. & Psal. 77. 20. *Thou ledest thy People like Sheep by the Hand of Moses and Aaron.* And again, Psal. 80. 1. *Hear, O thou Shepherd of Israel ! thou that ledest Joseph like a Sheep.* In allusion to this Custom, Christ is here said to go before, and his People like Sheep to follow, and to hear his Voice. *A Stranger will they not follow (saith the Parable) but will flee from him ; for they know not the Voice of Strangers.* Being accustom'd to the Call of the Shepherd, they know his Voice, and readily obey it ; but being unacquainted with the Sound or Tone of a Stranger, they shun and flee from him as from a Wolf, being mov'd by the Newness or Strangeness of the Voice. The Moral whereof is, that Christ's faithful Servants being acquainted with his Doctrine, which leads to Peace, Piety, and Holiness of Life, are willing to hear and walk by it ; knowing by those Tokens that 'tis the true Shepherd's Voice. But Impostors and false Teachers, that instil Notions contrary to Piety and sound Doctrine, they will not follow, but flee from them, taking it for the Voice of Seducers, calling them from the Ways of Truth and Peace, and drawing them into Errors and Divisions ; which they plainly discover by the Newness and Strangeness of their Doctrine, being quite contrary to that Piety and Probity which they have been taught by God ; and so it is a Stranger's, and not the true Shepherd's Voice.

This Parable spake Jesus unto them (saith St. John) but they understood not what things they were, which he spake unto them. He deliver'd his Mind so figuratively and parabolically unto them, that they could not rightly apprehend the Drift or Meaning of his Discourse ; which made him add the following words for the unfolding of it, *Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily I say unto you, I am the Door of the Sheep ;* where he repeats the same Terms of Asseveration, *Verily, verily,* and continues the same Metaphor, saying, *I am the Door of the Sheep.* A Door, you know, is that by which we ordinarily enter or pass into any House ; and
Christ

Christ styles himself a Door, because by him an Entrance is made into the Church of God, as by a Door an Entrance is made into any Dwelling. And because the Church is often compar'd to a Fold, so is Christ to a Door, as the only way by which the Sheep, or true Servants of God, can enter into that Fold.

All that ever came before me (saith Christ) are Thieves and Robbers; but the Sheep did not hear them. All that have ever pretended to the Messiahship, or to be Deliverers of the Jews from the Roman Yoke, and Restorers again of the Kingdom of Israel; of which kind were the foremention'd Theudas, and Judas of Galilee; have all been found Lyars and Impostors, having no Commission from God, nor bringing any Doctrines that carry any semblance or colour of coming from him; but by exciting the People to Sedition and Rebellion, shew'd that they rather proceeded from the Evil One, and were no better than the Doctrines of Devils: for which reason, *The Sheep did not hear them; but the People, instead of hearkning to them, fell with Rage and Fury upon them, destroying the Ringleaders, and dispersing all their Followers.* And therefore, to prevent all farther Danger from Impostors, and to confirm our Faith in him as the true Messias, and the only Saviour or Redeemer of Mankind, he inculcates again, *I am the Door; by me if any Man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find Pasture:* which is in effect the same with what he elsewhere tells us, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; Via, Veritas & Vita.* If any will walk aright, he must walk in my Way; if any will believe aright, he must believe in me, and receive my Truths; if any will live for ever, he must come to me, that he may have Life by me; if any Man enter into the Church here, he shall enter into Life hereafter: by this Door an Entrance shall be administer'd to him abundantly into the Kingdom of God; all that go in at it shall be sav'd from all Enemies and Dangers; they shall go in and out safely, and shall find Pasture; that is, all manner of good things, both temporal, spiritual and eternal. *The Thief indeed cometh not but for to steal, to kill, and to destroy.* The Impostor and Seducer aim only at their own worldly Interest, and stick not by Wars, Seditions and Tumults, to destroy and devour the Flock, to promote their ambitious and secular Ends; but I come upon far different and more heavenly Designs, *that ye may have Life, and have it more abundantly; that ye may attain to*
ever-

everlasting Life, and obtain a never-fading Crown of Glory in the highest Heavens.

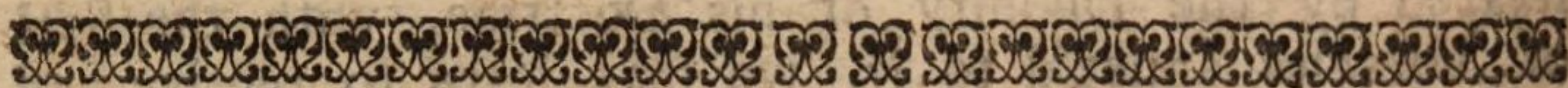
This is the Drift of this Parable, and the Design of the Gospel for this Day, which we ought to meditate upon, and to improve, by learning from it the following Lessons. As,

1st, From Christ's proving himself to be the true Messias, by coming in at the Door of a Divine Commission, demonstrated by the Divinity of his Doctrine, with the Seal of Miracles annex'd to it, we may learn to receive and rely upon him as the true and only Saviour of the World; and to reject all false Christs or Pretenders to the Messiahship, that climb up at the Windows, or some other way, without such an Authority, as Thieves and Robbers. And he being the true and good Shepherd, we may depend upon his Care and Provision, that we shall lack nothing that is good and convenient for us.

2^{dly}, From his Ministers coming in at the Door of a regular Ordination, and a lawful Call, we may learn to hear them, and not to follow Usurpers and Intruders into this Holy Office. Our Saviour caution'd his Disciples against all such, saying, *Beware of false Prophets, that come to you in Sheeps Clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves; by their Fruits ye shall know them: Mat. 7. 15, 16. Many shall come to you in my Name (saith he) saying, Lo! here is Christ, and lo! there. Behold! he is in the secret Chambers, says one, No; he is in the Field, saith another; he is in the Conventicle, saith a third: but believe them not (saith our Saviour) and go not after them: Mat. 24. St. Paul foretold the same, that after his departing grievous Wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the Flock; and that some would arise among themselves speaking perverse things, to draw Disciples after them; therefore watch against, and avoid them. Acts 20. 29, &c.*

3^{dly}, From Christ's comparing his Followers to Sheep, and calling them so often by that Name, they should learn to imitate the Simplicity, Meekness and Innocence of that harmless Creature. The Sheep, we know, often receives, but never does any harm; it is dumb before the Shearer, and openeth not its Mouth, to teach us Patience and Silence under the forest Affliction. Again, the Sheep is a very useful Creature, that feeds us with its Flesh, and clothes us with its Fleece; to teach us to be as serviceable as we may, and to do all the good we can to one another. In short, Christ himself, the Shepherd, bids us to learn of him to be
meek

meek and lowly in heart; and from the Sheep to be humble, tractable and obedient to his Call: so shall we hear his Voice, and follow him in Grace and Holiness here, and that will fit us to follow him to Glory and Happiness hereafter; where he will seat us among the Sheep at his right Hand, to hear the blessed Sentence of Absolution, and to be receiv'd into our Master's Joy: Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE X.

The EPISTLE for *Trinity-Sunday*.

Rev. iv. 1, to the end.

After this I looked, and a Door was opened in Heaven: And the first Voice, which I heard, was as it were of a Trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter; and immediately I was in the Spirit, &c.

THE mysterious Doctrine of the Holy Trinity was but obscurely reveal'd under the Old Testament; for which reason, before Christ's Coming, we find little or no knowledg of it. God the Father speaking in the Plural Number in the Creation of Man, saying, *Come let us make Man in our own Image*, Gen. 1. is by some thought to denote the whole Trinity; and the mention of *the Spirit's moving on the Face of the Waters*, and the *Son's bruising the Serpent's Head*, Gen. 18. they take to refer to the three Persons in it: But these are dark Discoveries of so great a Truth; and to interpret the *three Persons that appeared to Abraham*, to be the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, is not much better.

And a Father tells us, That God on purpose conceal'd from the Jews the Doctrine of the Trinity, lest they should thence take occasion to fall into Idolatry, and worship a Plurality of Gods, to which they were too prone.

But

the Epistle for Trinity-Sunday. 7

But when Christ came, this Mystery, which was in a great measure hidden from former Ages, was brought into a clearer Light by the Gospel. At our Saviour's Baptism, God the Father declar'd him by a Voice from Heaven to be his beloved and only-begotten Son; and the Holy Ghost descended on him at the same time, in the Shape of a Dove, to bear witness of him: where we have all the three Persons of the Trinity mention'd, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; all and each of which are after severally stil'd, *God blessed for ever*, having all the Titles and incommunicable Properties and Perfections of the Deity distinctly ascrib'd to them: which made *St. John* to affirm, that *there are three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.* 1 John 5. 7.

From hence the Church took occasion to profess and declare their Faith in this great Point, and to pay their solemn Praises and Adorations to the three several Persons: yea, tho this Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity was daily own'd in the Hymns, Creeds and Doxologies of the Church, yet one Day was thought fit to be consecrated to the celebrating of this great and adorable Mystery.

And because Christ's visible ascending up to Heaven, and the Holy Ghost's visible descending from thence, gave no small Light and Confirmation to this great Truth; therefore the Sunday after *Whitsunday*, which was before observ'd as the Octave of Pentecost, was made choice of for this purpose. And this is the Day on which we now commemorate the Holy Trinity. Accordingly, the Collect for the Day teaches us,

First, By the Confession of a true Faith to acknowledg the Glory of the eternal Trinity.

Secondly, In the Power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity.

Thirdly, To pray for Grace to be kept stedfast in this Faith against all Adversities and Opposition whatever. For the

First, The Epistle for the Day sets forth something of the Glory of the eternal Trinity: From whence we may learn to acknowledg and adore it. This *St. John* here doth in a Vision, representing God the Son sitting on the Throne of his Father, and coming with his Holy Angels to judg the World. The Vision begins in the first Words; *After this*

this I look'd, and behold a Door was open'd in Heaven. Here he seems with St. Paul to be wrapt up to the third Heaven, 2 Cor. 12. 2. Where looking about, he saw as it were the Door of Heaven open'd unto him; *And the first Voice that I heard (saith he) was as it were of a Trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.* That is, by the help of a shrill loud Voice, imitating the Sound of a Trumpet, he receiv'd Revelations of some future things, which should in time come to pass; which things we may suppose related to the last Judgment. Upon the sight and hearing of these things, *immediately (saith he) I was in the Spirit;* that is, in a Trance or Extasy, like St. Paul in the forecited Place, *Whether in the Body or out of the Body, he could not tell, God knoweth:* Or else, his being in the Spirit, might be his feeling some secret Impulses or Motions of God's Holy Spirit stirring within him. *And behold (saith he) a Throne was set in Heaven, and one sat on the Throne.* The Throne here represented to him, as set up in Heaven, was a Throne erected for Judicature; and the Son of God, to whom the Father hath committed all Judgment, is the Person here brought in as sitting upon this Throne, whose Glory is after describ'd by the Lustre or Shining of precious Stones: for in the next words he tells us, that *he that sat on the Throne, was to look upon like a Jasper and a Sardine Stone; and there was a Rainbow round about the Throne, in Sight like unto an Emerald:* that is, the Majesty or Colours wherein he was represented, were like unto the Colours of a Jasper and Sardine Stone; the former, to wit the Jasper Stone, for its Firmness and Hardness, represents the Power and Omnipotence of God; the latter, the Sardine Stone, for its fiery Redness, represents the Justice of God, who will come in flaming Fire to consume the Adversary, Heb. 12. 28. The Rainbow that was round about the Throne, was an Emblem or Token of God's Covenant made with Man, as we read, Gen. 9. 13. The orient Colours whereof represent the Brightness that was round about the Throne, and the Appearance of the Glory of the Lord; Ezek. 1. 28. And this is said to be in Sight like unto an Emerald, which for its pleasant Greenness and Mixture with other Colours, represents the Goodness of God, and his mixing Mercy with Judgment; delivering his People, at the same time that he destroys the Ungodly.

Moreover,

Moreover, Round about this Throne (as the following words declare) there were four and twenty Seats, and upon the Seats I saw four and twenty Elders sitting, clothed in white Rayment, and they had on their Heads Crowns of Gold. Where by the Seats are meant, so many Chairs plac'd about the Throne, and by the Elders sitting on them, are meant the Saints who at Christ's coming to Judgment, shall sit as Assessors with him. So he himself told his Disciples; *When the Son of Man shall sit on the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel*; Mat. 19. 28. which made St. Paul speak of it as a thing certain and well known, *Do ye not know* (saith he to the *Corinthians*) *that the Saints shall judg the World?* 1 Cor. 6. 23. meaning, that 'tis certain, that at the great final Judgment of all the World, the Saints shall bear Christ company in judging the Wicked, and shall sit with him in pronouncing Sentence against the evil Spirits. Which Elders or Saints are said to be clothed in white Rayment; that is, in Garments representing Purity and Innocence, as white Linen doth: by which it appears, that white Garments are not such bad Attire, as some would make it, when the Saints are here represented as array'd in them. And these are said to have on their Heads Crowns of Gold; meaning, that they have receiv'd that Crown of Glory, which God the righteous Judg shall give them in that Day.

To which 'tis added, that out of the Throne proceeded Lightnings, and Thundrings, and Voices: signifying, that as there were Lightnings, and Thundrings, and terrible Voices heard, at the giving of the Law, to awe Men to the observing, and terrify them from the breaking of it; so will the like terrible Signs and Tokens appear, at the giving in Evidence, and pronouncing Sentence against the wilful Violators of it.

And there were seven Lamps of Fire burning before the Throne; which are the seven Spirits of God. These Lamps are here interpreted to be the Holy Angels, which attend the Throne of God, and are as ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister to them, who shall be Heirs of Salvation. But the Lamps and the Spirits here being both reckon'd to the number Seven, hath made some think them to be meant of the seven Angels of the seven Churches of *Asia*; though the confining them to these, may perhaps be only a Conjecture, founded more in a Fancy about Numbers, than on any good ground of true Reasoning. Furthermore it is said, That

That *before the Throne, there was a Sea of Glass like unto Crystal*: Where by the Sea, is meant the Multitude of Persons or People, that shall then stand before the Tribunal of God, express'd here by a Sea, or Multitude of Waters, which in this Book often signifies a Multitude or Croud of People coming like Waves one upon another; as we read, *Rev. 17. 15.* By the Sea of Glass like unto Crystal, may be meant a Multitude of People then appearing, whose Consciences like a Crystal-Glass shall reflect and lay open all their Thoughts and Actions, and make them visible before the Judg: tho some would have this Sea of Glass to be a Figure of Heaven, represented as a Sea for its Largeness and Extent; and of Glass, for its Purity and Splendor. But I leave this to the Wisdom of the Learned.

To go on, 'tis here farther said, that *in the midst of the Throne, and round about the Throne, were four Beasts full of Eyes before and behind.* Who these four Beasts or living Creatures in this Representation were, is variously conjectur'd by the Writers on this obscure Book: some understand by them the four Apostles, *James Bishop of Jerusalem* our Lord's Brother, *Peter, John, and Andrew.* By their being full of Eyes before and behind, they understand their having the Gift of interpreting Scriptures; by which they could look backward, and declare what was past; and having the Gift of Prophecy, they could look forward, and foretel what was to come. But these being only Conjectures, let us go forward, and consider the Description here given of them.

The first Beast was like a Lion, the second like a Calf, the third had the Face of a Man, and the fourth was like a flying Eagle. These likewise are by sundry Authors variously interpreted: The Jewish Writers take these four Likenesses for the four Ensigns or Standards of *Israel*, viz. The Likeness of a Lion in the Camp of *Judah*, of a Man in the Camp of *Reuben*, of an Ox in the Camp of *Ephraim*, of an Eagle in the Camp of *Dan*; of which Likenesses we read also in the Prophecy of *Ezekiel*, Chap. 1. 10.

Others again take these four Likenesses for Representations of the four Evangelists, *Matthem, Mark, Luke, and John*; which they take from the Beginnings of their several Gospels.

St. Mark, for beginning his Gospel with the Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, *Prepare ye the Way of the Lord,* is wont to be represented by a Lion.

St.

St. *Matthew*, for beginning his Gospel with the Birth and Genealogy of our Saviour, is represented by the Face of a Man.

St. *Luke*, for beginning his Gospel with the Prophet *Zachary*, who was us'd to offer Sacrifices, is represented by an Ox.

St. *John*, for beginning his Gospel with the Divinity of Christ, is represented by a flying Eagle, which soars high, and carries our Contemplations up to Heaven. These Conjectures have occasion'd the picturing the four Evangelists with these Resemblances.

Now these being but uncertain Guesses about doubtful Matters, we may lay no great Stress upon them, being content to be ignorant at present of some things, which we may hereafter better understand. And so much for the first Part of this Vision of St. *John*, which teaches us to acknowledg the Glory of the eternal Trinity: for here we find God the Father appointing, God the Son judging, and God the Holy Ghost approving and executing the Sentences pronounc'd at the last and great Day.

The *Second* Part of it will teach us, in the Power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity. For *the four Beasts*, or living Creatures, whatever they are, are said to *have each six Wings about them*, to make them quick and nimble in God's Service; and to be *full of Eyes within*, to give them a full sight of their Duty: And *these rest not day and night*, saying, *Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!* Where the thrice *Holy* denotes the three Persons of the Trinity, and the once *Lord* in the singular Number, betokens the Unity of the Godhead in all three; and their not resting day and night, invoking and praising of him, denotes their continual worshipping of this Trin-*Une* Deity, whose Eternity is describ'd by these words, *Who was, and is, and is to come*; that is, who was before all Time, is at present, and ever will be. And *when those Beasts*, or living Creatures, *give Glory, and Honour, and Thanks to him that sat in the Throne, who liveth for ever and ever*; the *four and twenty Elders*, or Assessors, at the same time *fall down before the One God, that sitteth on the Throne, and worship him alone that liveth for ever and ever*; all of them *casting their Crowns before the Throne, and saying, in the singular number, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power*; for thou
hast

hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Thus we see, in this Vision of *St. John*, a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, with a Direction to acknowledge the one, and to adore the other. To which end, our Church teaches us,

In the *Third* place, to pray for Grace to keep us steadfast in this Faith, and evermore defend us from all Adversities and Opposition we may meet with in it. And this we should the rather do, because this great Article of the Trinity hath met with no small Opposition from the Atheists, Hereticks, and Scepticks of all Ages. The *Arians* of old were great Enemies and Opposers of this Doctrine, and so were the *Sabellians*, *Eunomians*, and many others: and 'tis still struck at and sought to be undermin'd by the Deists, *Socinians*, and Sensualists of our days, who set up their shallow Reason above Divine Revelation, and deride all those Truths which they cannot comprehend. And because the Contagion of these evil Principles seems to spread too far, let us pray that our Faith fail not, but that we may be kept steadfast in the Belief of the Holy Trinity, who have each had their share in the Work of our Redemption; let us take heed that we forget not God that made us, nor deny the Lord that bought us, nor resist the Holy Spirit, that can alone sanctify and save us. Let not the seeming Difficulties that attend this great Truth, any way stagger or shake our Faith, in a matter of so great Concern and Comfort to us. Our Reason is puzzled about the daily Objects of our Senses, and can scarce know the Nature of any thing that is before us; how then can we dive into the Essence of God, or comprehend that which is incomprehensible? This Mystery of the blessed Trinity being reveal'd to us by all the Persons of it, we know enough of it for our present State: and tho Reason alone cannot teach, and so may not presume to judg of it, yet we have all the reason in the world to believe it; being made known to us by him who is Truth it self, and cannot deceive any. Our Knowledg here is but in part, and we cannot see to the bottom of any thing; and much less may we hope to fathom this unsearchable Depth. And yet God hath imparted to us Knowledg enough to make us magnify him, and lessen our selves: We know enough to learn Humility, and to discover to us our own Ignorance; and if we are modest
and,

and contented, we shall e'er long know much more. In the mean time,

Our Faith in this Article of the Trinity will be more noble and great, when it makes our Reason to stoop to it, and overcomes all its Doubts; and we shall better celebrate the Holy Trinity by a profound Silence and Adoration, than by disputing about it, or prying too curiously into the Manner of it. And therefore instead of saying with *Nicodemus*, *How can these things be?* let us pray with him in the Gospel, *Lord I believe, help my Unbelief.*

Wherefore, in the last place, from what hath been said, let us all learn firmly to adhere to this great Truth against all Opposition; holding fast the Profession of this Faith without wavering, and not be warp'd or drawn from it by the Smiles or Frowns of any. To this end, let us consider,

1. That this is what we have all promis'd in our Baptism, *viz.* to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, whereof this of the Holy Trinity is the prime fundamental one, upon which all the rest are founded. To keep to that, is a good means of being stedfast and immovable in all the rest; but if we waver and fall from that, we endanger the whole Fabrick of our Faith, and run into Infidelity. So that the *Socinians* and Scepticks of our Age, that call in question this or any other Article of the Christian Faith, are guilty of a manifest Breach of their Baptismal Vow; they are Deserters and Renegadoes from the Faith, in forsaking that, which they engag'd to stick to to their Lives end. And such Fugitives and Revolters from the Faith shall e'er long receive the heavy Punishment of their Apostacy: which should teach us to beware of an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.

2. Know that this Doctrine of the Trinity hath not only Divine Revelation to support it, which is the chiefest of all Props; but likewise the concurrent Testimony and Consent of the Catholick Church in all Ages to confirm it, which is an additional Strength or Motive to our Belief of it: for he must be highly conceited of his own Wisdom, that will set it up above the Wisdom of God, and the Faith of the whole Catholick Church. And having this Evidence, let us continue stedfast in this Faith without any Wavering or Doubtfulness. Moreover,

3. Our Church minds us, in the Service of this Day, to pray for Grace so to do, that we may ever acknowledg the

Glory of the eternal Trinity, and likewise persevere in worshipping the Unity. There may be many Allurements and Temptations to draw us from this Faith, some endeavouring to discourage, and others to dispute us out of it; and therefore it will be requisite to call in the Assistance of Divine Grace, to keep us firm and steady to it. And as the three Persons of the Trinity are one in Nature, so let them be united in our Devotion; still praying to the Father, in the Name of the Son, and through the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, that *as long as we live we may praise them together, and magnify them in this manner.* So the Apostles were wont to join them in their usual Salutation; *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.* Amen. And the Church teaches the same in that devout Doxology, *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.* More particularly, let us this day especially bless God, for his gracious Discovery of this sublime Mystery, and thank our heavenly Father, that *the Mystery that was hid in former Ages from the Wise and Prudent, is now revealed unto Babes; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

In short then, let us establish our Minds in a stedfast Belief of this Divine Truth, that nothing may shake or draw us from this Faith in the ever-blessed and undivided Trinity: to which end, let us submit our Reason to Divine Revelation, believing what God hath told us, tho we cannot fully understand the Manner of it; waiting for a fuller Manifestation of this and all other Mysteries in the World to come.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Praise, world without end.
Amen.





DISCOURSE XI.

The GOSPEL for *Trinity-Sunday.*

St. John iii. 1—16.

There was a Man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a Ruler of the Jews ; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God ; for no Man can do these Miracles that thou doest, except God be with him, &c.

THIS Conference of our Blessed Saviour with *Nicodemus*, serving to give some light into the Knowledge and Belief of the Holy Trinity, is appointed to be read as the Gospel for this Day to that end. For here we have express and distinct mention made of God the Father, whose immediate Power and Presence was with Jesus Christ in all that he said or did, *ver. 2.* And likewise of God the Son, who *came down from Heaven*, and continu'd to be *in Heaven*, even when he *convers'd here on Earth*, *ver. 13.* As also of God the Holy Ghost, who moving upon the Waters of Baptism, effects a new Creation, as he did by moving upon the face of the Waters in the old Creation, *ver. 5, 6.* The Relation of which Particulars begins thus :

There was a Man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a Ruler of the Jews ; one of the Sanhedrim, their great Council : The same came to Jesus by night, not venturing to come by day for fear of the Jews ; and said unto him, Rabbi, a Title usually given to the Jewish Doctors, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no Man can do these Miracles that thou doest, except God with him. Where we have a plain Confession of God the Father, to whose Almighty Influence he ascribes both his Doctrine and Miracles. Our Saviour liking well enough of this Confession, seeks to carry him farther, and to persuade him to be one of his Profelytes and Followers, saying unto him, Verily, verily I
G 3
say

say unto thee, Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God; ver. 3. Nicodemus, as yet gross of understanding, and knowing little or nothing of such spiritual matters, replies to him, How can a Man be born again when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his Mother's Womb, and be born? Jesus perceiving the Dulness of his Apprehension, and how little he knew of the Christian Religion, endeavours to inform him better, and to give him a clearer Insight into heavenly and spiritual Matters; to which end, he renews and explains his former Answer, saying, *Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a Man be born again of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* Where, beside what is said before and after of God the Son, is express mention of the Spirit, or God the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity: adding withal, that 'tis the receiving a new Birth by Baptism, and entering upon a new Life by spiritual Regeneration, that can alone qualify us for the Sight and Fruition of God; for without the washing of Water, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, we can neither enter into the Church or Kingdom of Grace here, nor into Heaven or the Kingdom of Glory hereafter. Profelytes were admitted of old by Water into the Jewish Church, and so they are still into the Christian Church by the Waters of Baptism; but so, that as the Waters of *Bethesda* were stir'd by an Angel before they became medicinal or sanative for the Health of the Body, so the Waters of Baptism must be mov'd by the Holy Spirit, before they become useful or salutary for the Health of the Soul. And as the Jewish Profelytes were said to be *recens nati*, new born, so the Christian Profelytes are by the *Laver of Regeneration* said to be *born again of Water and the Holy Ghost*. So that *Nicodemus's* Error was the mistaking a natural for a spiritual Regeneration, and taking an Entrance into the Church for a second Entrance into the Mother's Womb. In short, the Sense of our Saviour's Words to *Nicodemus* was, that the owning his Doctrine and Miracles to be divine, was not sufficient for his Salvation, but he must become a Christian Profelyte, or a Follower of Christ, before he could receive any Benefit by either; and that he must enter into the Church, before he could enter into Heaven: which shews us the absolute Necessity of Baptism in order to Salvation, and the great Danger of neglecting it, where it may be had by duly qualify'd and authoriz'd Persons.

Our

Our Saviour having told him of this new and spiritual Birth, he goes on to confirm it in the next Verse; *That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* Whatsoever is born of another, partakes of the Nature and Qualities of its Sire or Original; that which is born of the Flesh, is carnal and fleshly, dispos'd to Vice and Corruption; that which is born of the Spirit, is spiritual, and hath the Seeds of Grace and eternal Life. *Marvel not therefore* (saith Christ) *that I said unto thee, ye must be born again;* for in your first natural and unregenerate State, ye are dead in Trespases and Sins, Children of Wrath, and Heirs of Damnation: whereas by this new Birth ye are made Children of Grace, the Sons of God, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. All which proceed from the free Grace and Bounty of the Holy Ghost, and its prolifick Operation upon the Waters of Baptism: for as *the Wind bloweth where it listeth, so the Inspirations of the Holy Spirit are free and voluntary:* and *as thou hearest the Sound of the Wind, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth;* so the Calls and Motions of the Spirit are secret and invisible, and the Influences thereof are better felt and heard, than seen. So the Wiseman tells us, *As thou knowest not the way of the Spirit, or how the Child groweth in the Womb, even so thou knowest not the Works of God, who maketh all;* Eccles. ii. 5. And therefore let not this Doctrine stumble thee; for tho the Manner of the Holy Ghost's working herein be supernatural and incomprehensible, yet the Effects thereof are as apparent and visible as those of the Wind.

Upon this Discourse, *Nicodemus*, as yet backward of Belief, or a Man of little Faith, *answer'd and said unto him, How can these things be?* Which Question supposes not only his doubting, but denying the Truth of them: and his demanding the Reason and Manner of them, implies his looking upon them as incredible or impossible. To whom therefore our Saviour with some Smartness reply'd, *Art thou a Master of Israel, and knowest not these things?* Is it possible that a Ruler of the Jews, and a Doctor in Israel, should be so great a stranger to these things; it being a known Custom and Practice among the Jews, to receive Profelytes into their Church by Baptism as well as Circumcision, and to stile them new-born that were thus receiv'd into it?

Now as *Nicodemus* was thus offended at the Doctrine of the Baptismal Regeneration, because he could not see how these things should be, tho he might daily see and know it from the Doctrine of his own Church in the Case of Profelytes; so the *Nicodemus's*, or great Pretenders to Reason in our days, deny the Doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and other Mysteries of the Gospel, because their shallow Reason is not able to fathom the Depth of them, nor their Senses show them how these things can be; tho they have been receiv'd and own'd by the whole Christian Church throughout all Ages.

Hence we find the Scepticks and Sensualists often asking, how one should be three, and three one? How the same Person should be God and Man, finite and infinite, when to be finite is not to be infinite, and to be infinite is not to be finite? Thus loading these Divine Doctrines with all the Absurdities and Contradictions they can; and so the Mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation are Stumbling-blocks to the *Socinians*, and to the Deists Foolishness: and all because their Reason cannot see the Way and Manner of their Existence.

But *canst thou by searching find out God? (saith holy Job) Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as Heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea: Job 11. 7, 8, 9.* Canst thou mete out the Heavens with a Span, or fathom the Sea with a Bucket, or measure the Earth with a Compass? And yet these things are infinitely more easy, than to comprehend him that is incomprehensible. Holy *Job* elsewhere tells us, that God accuses the very Angels of Folly, in prying too far into things which they cannot fully understand: And how much more justly may he condemn the Sons of Men of Madness, in searching too much into things that are unsearchable, and past finding out by human Reason? Can a Worm know the Nature of Man, or can Man understand much of the Nature of Angels? And how then should we know much of God, between whom and us the distance is infinitely greater? Alas! all the Creatures of the World, in comparison of him, are but as the small Drop of the Bucket, that diminishes not the Measure, or as the light Dust upon the Ballance, that alters not the Weight; yea, they are all nothing, less than nothing, and Vanity: and how then can our short Sight penetrate into the Divine Nature,

Nature, and the Manner of its Existence? or our finite Understandings grasp Infinity? But to cure this Itch of Curiosity, or rather Scab of Infidelity, let us consider,

1st, The Shortness of our Sight, even in natural things that lie more level to it: there are Mysteries in Nature, Art and Providence, that baffle and confound our Reason; and many things which we daily behold and believe too, are above the reach of our Understanding. How shallow and imperfect is our Insight into many common and ordinary Matters? Are not the wisest Philosophers puzzled about the Nature of Sounds and Colours, which are the daily and ordinary Objects of our Senses? Who can solve the Riddles of Sympathy and Antipathy? or shew why the Loadstone draws Iron, when its Influence reaches not things of a more likely and easy Attraction? Is not Reason at a loss about the ebbing and flowing of the Sea? And can it tell why the Needle of the Compass should so faithfully and constantly observe the North Pole? Does not every little Fly or Worm puzzle us to find out the secret Springs of their Life and Motion? Who can tell what kind of Knot it is that ties our Soul and Body together? or explain that Sacred Band that unites Time to Eternity? And is it reasonable to doubt or deny either, because we cannot know how they subsist and are united together? But if our Reason be thus short sighted in natural and common things, that daily occur to our Senses, then consider,

2^{dly}, How weak it must needs be in Divine and Spiritual Matters, which are so much above them; here certainly our Candle must burn very dim, and stand in need of some brighter Light to illuminate and direct it: *The natural Man discerns not the things of God* (saith the Apostle) *neither indeed can he, because they are spiritually discern'd*; 1 Cor. 2. 14. And therefore it must be great Folly and Presumption in any to reject the Mysteries of the Gospel, because their weak Reason cannot discover how these things should be. Does not the Splendor of some Objects dazzle and confound the Sight? Can our weak Eyes stedfastly behold the Sun? And if our shallow Understandings cannot comprehend natural and earthly Matters, why should we think them able to fathom supernatural and heavenly Truths? So our Saviour here argues with *Nicodemus*; *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* Ver. 12. Moreover consider,

3^{dly},

3dly, That these things are reveal'd from Heaven by him that is Truth it self, and therefore there can be no reason to doubt or disbelieve them. We are expressly told, that *there are three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one: 1 John 5. 7.* Where a Trinity of Persons is asserted in the Unity of the Godhead; and we may safely build upon the Word of him, that can neither deceive or be deceiv'd. There are some Truths in Religion that were never propounded to our Reason, being above the Ken and Discovery of it: such is this Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which we are to take upon God's Word, and to believe without scanning. For to oppose our Reason to Revelation, is to set a Candle above the Sun; yea, 'tis to chuse Darkness rather than Light, and to follow a blind Guide before an infallible Director. Reason indeed is a good Guide, as far as it can reach; but as the Eye is limited in its Prospect, and cannot see beyond its Sphere, so hath God set Bounds to our Reason, saying, *Hither shall it come, and no farther:* it may see a great way in visible and corporeal Objects, but 'tis blind in Mysteries, and cannot look within the Veil; here it must yield to Faith, and resign to Revelation. We know but in part here; and therefore in these sublime and mysterious Truths we must be content to be ignorant, and submit our Reason to Faith, without prying too far into the manner of them, or saying with *Nicodemus, How can these things be?*

But to go on with the Conference; our Saviour having acquainted *Nicodemus* with the great Mysteries of the Baptismal Regeneration, and the Holy Trinity, he proceeds to the Testimony given for the Proof of them, *viz.* the Testimony of Miracles and Eye-witnesses, the best Evidence that can be given of any Truth; call'd therefore in Scripture, *The Demonstration of the Spirit and Power.* Now this Evidence we have in the next Verse; *Verily, verily I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our Witness:* that is, I and my Disciples teach you Doctrines that we know by Divine Revelation, and have been confirm'd to us by Miracles before our eyes. So *St. John, That which we have seen with our Eyes, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you, that ye may have Fellowship with us; and truly our Fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost: 1 John 1. 1.* Yea, Christ here adds concerning himself, that *no Man hath ascended up to Heaven, to gain the*

the Knowledg of these things, *but he that came down from Heaven, to reveal his Father's Will, even the Son of Man who is in Heaven, by his Divine Nature; even whilst in his Human Nature he converses with, and teaches us here upon Earth: And yet (saith he to Nicodemus and the rest of the Jews) ye receive not our Witness in these heavenly things, tho they stand so well confirm'd by Divine and Human Testimony, which must render your Unbelief the more unreasonable and inexcusable.*

But yet for all this, *As Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness on a Pole, so must the Son of Man be lifted up on a Cross; to the end, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life: that is, as all that look'd up to the brazen Serpent were heal'd of all manner of Diseases, so all that by an Eye of Faith look up to Jesus shall be freed from all the Maladies of the Soul, and made Partakers of eternal Life.*

This is briefly the Substance of this Day's Gospel; which may serve,

1st, To convince us of the great and indispenfable Necessity of Baptism: for tho *Nicodemus* here made a good Confession, by owning Christ to be *a Teacher come from God*, and believing his Miracles to be such, as *none could do except God were with him*; yet this was not sufficient without Baptism, for Christ tells him, that *except a Man be born again of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. Where, being born again of Water can be meant only of Baptism, there being no New-Birth by that Element, but by that Sacrament. And this is here made so necessary, that there is no Admission into the Church here, or into Heaven hereafter without it. And therefore Christ gave a Commission to his Apostles, *To go and baptize all Nations, in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; Mat. 28.* signifying, that Disciples are to be receiv'd into the Church by the Waters of Baptism. Accordingly we read, that all the Profelytes and Converts to Christianity, mention'd in the Acts of the Apostles, were admitted into it by this Ceremony; *Repent and be baptized* (saith St. Peter to the three thousand Converts) *Acts 2. 38.* *Arise, why tarriest thou? and be baptized* (saith Ananias to Saul upon his Conversion to Christianity) *Acts 22. 16.* *Lydia* and her House were admitted into the Church this way;

way ; and so was the Jailor and his Family ; and so have all Christians been ever since. All which shew us what regard we are to have for this Sacrament, and what care Parents are to take to bring their Children to it ; especially considering, first, the great Benefits they receive by this Sacred Ordinance. This is the Door of Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, and therefore our Saviour would have *Children* brought to it, because *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven* ; Mark 10. 14. 'Tis the ordinary Means of Salvation ; for *he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved* ; Mark 16. 16. The Spirit of God accompanying this Ordinance, gives the Remission of Sins, and seals to us the Promise of eternal Life. To this we may add, secondly, the Consideration of the extreme Danger of denying or delaying of Baptism ; for *he that believeth not, and is unbaptiz'd, shall be damned*. By omitting of this Sacrament, we do as it were shut the Gate of Heaven against Infants, and deprive them of the ordinary Way and Means of their Salvation ; which should make all Parents afraid or asham'd of this Neglect.

2dly, From *Nicodemus's* denying the Baptismal Regeneration, and others denying the Doctrine of the Trinity, because their weak Reason cannot comprehend how these things should be ; we may learn not to depend too much upon our own Reason, but to rely chiefly on Divine Revelation in such Mysteries : For the former, we see, is a crooked, erring and uncertain Rule ; the latter is a sure, safe and infallible Guide. We know how the Gentiles lost their way, when they had no better Conduct than their own Reason ; and how the Heathens were bewilder'd, when they follow'd only the blind and uncertain Guidance of natural Light ; both which led them into many vain Superstitions and gross Idolatrys : but thanks be to God, we are not left to grope in the dark as they were, but are happily assisted by brighter Revelations. Let us not then prefer a Candle before the Sun, or set up our dim Reason above the Light of Divine Revelations ; that is, let us not scan Mysteries by our weak and shallow Apprehensions, but rather make them the Objects of our Admiration than Curiosity. Particularly in this of the Trinity, let us thankfully acquiesce in what God hath reveal'd to us of himself, evermore praising him, and saying, *Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabbath*.

Now

Epistle for the first Sunday after Trinity. 93

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be ascrib'd as is most due, all Glory, Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, both now and evermore. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XII.

The EPISTLE for the First Sunday after *Trinity.*

I St. John iv. 7, to the end.

Beloved, let us love one another; for Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God: he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is Love, &c.

THE Collect for this Day teaches us to beg of God the Acceptance of our Prayers, and the Assistance of our Infirmities, that so in keeping his Commandments we may please him both in Will and Deed.

The Epistle mentions and insists upon the great Commandment of Love, which is indeed the Sum of all the Commandments; and the keeping of it is therefore stil'd, *the fulfilling of the Law.*

It begins with an Exhortation to this excellent Grace, which it backs with many pressing Motives and Encouragements, and concludes with some Marks and Trials of the Truth of it, as we shall find in the following Discourse.

I begin, as the Epistle doth, with the Exhortation to this Grace of Love, in these words, *Beloved, let us love one another*; where 'tis usher'd in with the kind Compellation of *Beloved*, the better to insinuate and instil this Lesson into us. St. John is in Scripture stil'd, *The Beloved Disciple*, or *The Disciple whom Jesus loved*; for he lean'd on his Breast, and so was nearest his Heart, and knew more of his Mind than any other: by which means his Breast being inflam'd with the Love of God, breath'd out nothing but Love to the Brethren; *Beloved* saith he) *let us love one another.*

But

But what is the Love here exhorted to? Now tho Love be a Passion better felt than describ'd, yet the Love here recommended may be thus defin'd; 'Tis a Vertue or gracious Disposition of Soul, that keeps Men from doing any harm, and puts them upon doing all the good they can to one another. Where,

First, I stile it a Vertue, for so it is both moral and theological: as it is dictated by the natural Law of Reason, 'tis a moral Virtue, and so 'tis handled by the Heathen Philosophers; as 'tis reveal'd and requir'd by the written Law of God, 'tis a theological Grace or Vertue, and so 'tis handled by Divines. Again,

Secondly, I stile it a gracious Disposition of Soul, to signify the Seat of it, which is within the Heart, where all true Love is seated, not outward only in the Lip or the Tongue, which is no better than Hypocrisy and Dissimulation. Again,

Thirdly, Here are added the two essential Properties of Love, which are to do no manner of harm, and to do all possible good to one another.

1st, I say, true Love keeps Men from doing any the least harm to another; for *Love worketh no Ill to his Neighbour, yea, it thinketh no Evil*, saith the Apostle, and harbours not the least Thought of doing any bad turn. Now Men, you know, may receive much harm from another sundry ways; as in the Soul, by drawing them into Sin, or creating to them any unnecessary Grief or Trouble; in the Body, by Maiming, Murder, and any other Acts of Violence; in his Goods, by taking or withholding from him any thing that is his; in his good Name, by spreading evil Reports, Backbiting and Detraction: From all which Evils the Love here requir'd will effectually restrain us; for these being the common Effects of Envy, Hatred and Malice, are inconsistent with that Love we owe to one another.

2^{dly}, True Love not only keeps Men from the least harm, but puts them upon doing all the good they can to each other; for Love wishes well to his Neighbour, and that will move to the doing all good Offices for him. Now as Men may receive much hurt, so may they receive much good from one another: as in their Soul, by keeping them from Sin, and lightning the Burden of their Sorrows; in their Bodies, by preserving them from Violence and ill Usage, by relieving their Necessities, and healing their Distempers; in their Goods, by defending them from Fraud, Rapine

and

and Oppression, and helping them to Right that suffer Wrong. In their good Names, by vindicating them from all unjust Calumnies, Censures and evil Reports, and giving them the just Praises due to their Merits and good Works. These and many other good Offices may be done to Mankind, which the true Love we are to bear to one another will make us ever ready and willing to perform. This is briefly the Nature and Properties of that Brotherly Love which we are here exhorted to: To press and recommend which, the Apostle tells us,

In the next words, the Rise and Original of this Love, whence it comes, and how it may be attain'd; *for Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*: meaning, that Love is the most Divine and God-like thing that can be found in us; by it we become most especially like unto God, and resemble him in that darling Attribute and Perfection, in which he most delighteth. Love is a Ray of the Divinity darted upon us, and where 'tis fix'd makes us in some measure Partakers of the Divine Nature; *for every one that loveth is born of God*: He is of a heavenly Rise and Extraction, and comes from the Divine and Spiritual Seed; he is born not of the Will of Man, but of God, whom he resembles in his Nature and Perfection, as Children do their Parents in their Features and Complexion. Nothing makes us more the Children of God, or more nearly ally'd to the Divine Majesty, than this Grace of Love, which is our greatest Glory, and renders us most amiable and acceptable to him: for thereby God communicates himself to us, and gives us the most intimate Acquaintance with, and Knowledg of his Mind; for he that loveth, is not only born of God, *but knoweth God*: that is, not with a bare notional Knowledg, such as evil Men and Spirits have, which rather makes them tremble at, than rejoice at him; but with a saving experimental Knowledg, such as only good Men and Saints have, who are thereby made like unto God, and transform'd into the same Image from Glory to Glory. Whereas,

He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is Love: He is an utter Stranger to the Divine Nature, and never felt its Influence; he knoweth nothing of God as he ought to know, being destitute of Love; he hath nothing of God in him, who is made up of Love and Kindness to Mankind; he hath more of Envy and Enmity of the evil Spirits, to whom he conforms in his Nature, and with whom he shall have

have his Portion. To know God aright, is to be Followers of him as dear Children, and to walk in Love; for his very Nature and Essence consists in Love, and we cannot imitate or resemble him more than by the Acts of Kindness and Charity.

But wherein doth this transcendent Love of God to Mankind appear? Why, among other things the Apostle gives us a high and eminent Instance of it in the next Verse; *In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live thro him.* When we were utterly lost and undone by the first Transgression, and thereby left in a helpless and hopeless Condition, God was pleas'd, out of his tender Mercy, to take pity upon us, and to send his only Son out of his Bosom to recover us from this forlorn State: and because nothing else could do it, he was content to die for us, that we might live thro him. When we were dead in Trespases and Sins, he restor'd us again to a Life of Grace, and by his Holy Spirit hath given us the assur'd Hopes of being rais'd to a Life of Glory. And what greater Expression of Love could be ever shewn us, than the Father's in sending, the Son's in consenting, the Spirit's in assisting, and all of them in contriving and effecting these things for us?

Herein is Love (saith our Apostle) *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins;* that is, herein will this Love of God appear the greater, that we did not begin with any Love to God, that might engage or encourage him to make this Return to us: for we, alas! had no sense of our Condition, no power to help our selves, no, nor yet Ability so much as to ask any Relief; but he began with us, and was before-hand in his Love to us; yea, he was so early as to prevent us with his Loving-kindness, before we knew any thing of it, and sent his Son to propitiate his Wrath, and reconcile us to himself, when we were Enemies and Strangers to him: which must enhance his Love above all Expression or Conception.

From hence the Apostle very rationally infers, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* These inexpressible and unrequitable Acts of the Divine Love should stir up in us something of a like Love and Affection to the Brethren; not that we can answer or come up to the Height of his unparallel'd Love towards us, but that we should imitate and return in all the good Offices that

that we can, not objecting Unkindness or Unworthiness in any; for he loved us without any Merit, or any other Motive but his own Goodness; he is kind to the Evil and the Unthankful, and causes the Sun to shine upon the Just and the Unjust: and we are bid to be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful; that is, to imitate him in the undistinguish'd Acts of his Love and Bounty: but much more are we to express our Affection to such as either need, desire or deserve our Kindness.

All the Requital that God expects for his Bounty and Goodness, is the Return of Acts of Love and Kindness to the Brethren: as for himself, he is above our Beneficence; our Goodness extendeth not to him, we can present him with nothing, but what was his own before: all that we can do, is to express our Love, and extend our Kindness to one another; which if done for God's sake, and in obedience to his Command, will be an acceptable Oblation.

Beside, as we are not capable of giving any thing unto God, so neither is he capable of receiving any thing from us; for *no Man* (saith our Apostle) *hath seen God at any time.* All Acts of Love and Kindness pass among such as see and converse with each other; and the Objects of our Senses are commonly the Objects of our Compassion and Charity: whereas God is invisible, and above the Reach of our Eye or Converse; and so no good Office of ours is able to come at him.

But tho we cannot see God in his Person, yet we may daily behold him in his Members; and what we do to any of these, he reckons as done to himself: yea, *if we love one another*, he is not far from any of us; for *he then dwelleth in us, and his Love is perfected in us*: He takes up his Abode in a Heart that is fill'd with Love; he resides in it by his Holy Spirit, and raises its Love to the highest Perfection.

But by what Mark or Token may we know this dwelling of God in us, and we in him? Why, that we are told in the next Verse: *Hereby we know, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* If we find the Influence of the Holy Spirit moving in us by the Fruits of Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, and the like, we may conclude that God is in us of a truth; for if God be Love, as he frequently styles himself, then where Love is, there is God; he is an Inhabitant in the Bosom where Love resides, and he is a Stranger to the Breast where that is wanting.

98 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

By this Spirit (saith our Apostle) *we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the World*: which is such an Instance of the Divine Love, as cannot but inflame our Hearts with Love to God, and to one another. Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error; *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*. Such a Faith in the Son of God, working by Love, can proceed only from the Spirit of God dwelling in us; and by that *we have known and believed the Love that God hath to us, that God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him*. This is the Mark here given of our Relation to God, and his Residence with us, *viz.* the Love we bear both to him and the Brethren; which the Apostle here doubles and repeats, that we may the better know and try our selves by it.

Now the Perfection of this Love consists in a bold owning and confessing of these Truths in times of greatest Danger; for so the next words tell us, *Herein is our Love made perfect, that we may have Boldness in the Day of Judgment, because as he is, so are we in this World*: meaning, that when our Love comes to the Trial of the last Day, it may be found constant and sincere, that as Christ is true and constant to us, so may we be to him in this World. The Love that Christ bore to us did set him above the Fear of Death, or any manner of Discouragement that might hinder the Effects of his Kindness to us; and the Love we bear to him should not suffer us to shrink from our Faith and Confidence in him, for the Fear or Frowns of any.

There is no Fear in Love (saith the beloved Disciple) true Love is not daunted with the Appearance of any Difficulties, but rather gladly embraces the Opportunity of surmounting them. *Perfect Love casteth out Fear*, it banisheth all Fear of Danger, yea, even of Death it self, and declines not the hardest Proof or Trial of its Sincerity: it inspires Men with Courage enough to despise Difficulties, and delights in what may best express its Constancy. *Fear hath Torment*, and is evermore attended with Anxiety and Trouble: that weak Passion creates Pain upon the least Prospect of Danger, and will not suffer Men to go on in any Enterprize, that hath any Shew of it, but is apt to draw back upon every light Occasion; and therefore *he that feareth, is not made perfect in Love*: such a one will forsake his Friend upon the least Temptation, and refuse to own or stand

stand by him, when any Danger appears; and consequently hath never arriv'd to the Perfection of Love, nor will ever find the Comfort and Reward of it.

But is Love then accompanied with no kind of Fear? Are we not bid to fear God, as well as to love him? And may not these well enough consist together? Is not Perfection ascrib'd as much to the Fear as to the Love of God? And why then must these cast out or exclude each other? In answer to this we may note, that there is,

1st, A base cowardly Fear, that shrinks from all Trouble, and will run no hazards for the beloved Object: and such a Fear as that, is void of all true Love, and is utterly inconsistent with it. And there is,

2^{dly}, A prudent and cautious Fear, that prevents needless Trouble, and preserves from unnecessary Dangers: and this may very well consist with true Love, and indeed ought to go with it; for we are bid to be *wise as Serpents*, to avoid all unnecessary Danger and Trouble; and also *harmless as Doves*, which are Emblems of Love and Innocence. Beside, we may observe farther a servile Fear, which is the Fear of Slaves and Vassals, who do nothing but from a Dread of Punishment, or Fear of the Lash: and this likewise is void of all true Love, and is cast out by it. As also a filial Fear, which is the Fear of Sons or Children towards their Parents, who are afraid of offending them, and watchful against all Occasions of it; and this is not only consistent with Love, but is a good Sign and Effect of it.

This is the Love that we owe unto God, and is indeed the mere Duty of Gratitude; for he began with us, and when we were Enemies to him, that deserv'd nothing but Wrath and Vengeance, he sent his Son to die for us, and reconcile us to himself: for which reason (as St. John tells us in the next words) *we may well enough love him, because he first loved us.* Love, we say, is the Loadstone of Love, that draws very strongly, and by an invisible Influence constrains us to return it; but the unparallel'd Instances of the Divine Love should powerfully move and excite our Affections, and kindle the warmest Flames of Love in our breasts towards God. And this, as we have before seen, is to be express'd by our Love to the Brethren; insomuch (as the Apostle here adds) *If a Man say, I love God and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar: for he that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* The Love of God and our Neighbour

bour are inseparable, being the two great Commandments, that are often link'd and join'd together, as we read, *Mat.* 22. 38, 39. And he that would put them asunder by pretending to love the one without the other, doth but falsify and deceive both himself and others: for 'tis impossible truly to love God, and not to do as he bids; especially in so reasonable a Command, as shewing Kindness to those who are so nearly ally'd both to him and us. He that loves another, will shew some Regard to his Children, and Friends, and such as appertain to him, for his sake: And if we love God as we ought, we shall express it to those that bear his Image and belong to him. Likeness is a usual Cause and Motive of Love, and God having made Man in his own Likeness, and in the same Likeness to each other, we should be thereby mov'd to love God and one another.

Moreover, Sight and Conversation are apt to breed Love and Friendship; it being much easier to love one, whom we daily behold and converse with, than one that we never saw. And hence the Apostle argues, that if a Man loves not his Brother, whom he daily sees, he cannot love God, whom he never saw.

From all which the beloved Disciple concludes with these words, *And this Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, loves his Brother also.* Both of them are enjoin'd by the same Authority, and he that violates the one, is guilty of the Breach of the other.

This is briefly the Sense and Sum of this Day's Epistle, which breathes out nothing but Love to God in the first place; whose transcendent Greatness in himself, and Goodness to his Creatures, may justly challenge and exact it from us. To our Brethren and Neighbours, in the next place, whose Affinity in Nature and Blood doth likewise require it. There is implanted in us a natural Disposition to love those of the same kind: we see something of it among brute Beasts, who agree well enough among themselves; and we must be more savage than they, if we hate and prey upon one another. Again,

There is a great deal of solid and substantial Pleasure in loving and doing good to one another; 'tis a Divine and God-like thing, and nothing makes us more like, or more acceptable to him, it cheers the Mind with such an inward Peace and Tranquillity, as far exceed all sensual Pleasures and Delights.

Finally,

Gospel for the first Sunday after Trinity. 101

Finally, Love will be attended at last, with an ample and everlasting Reward, and fill the Soul with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory: It will draw the Affections of God to us, and fix them so, that we shall live for ever in the unquenchable Flames of the Divine Love. Indeed the Love of God and our Brother, is the best Qualification for those heavenly Mansions, where Love reigns, and is advanced to its highest Perfection; to which if we ever hope to come, we must, as Christ hath given commandment, love one another: for there no Hatred, Malice, or Discord enter; nothing but perfect Love and Amity can inhabit in those pure and happy Regions. For which therefore let us prepare our selves by an unfeign'd Love to God and the Brethren.



DISCOURSE XIII.

The G O S P E L for the First Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke xvi. 19, to the end.

There was a certain rich Man, who was clothed in Purple and fine Linen, and fared sumptuously every Day. And there was a certain Beggar, nam'd Lazarus, who was laid at his Gate full of Sores, and desiring to be fed with the Crumbs that fell from the rich Man's Table: Moreover, the Dogs came and lick'd his Sores, &c.

IN the Epistle for this Day, St. John had been pressing by sundry Arguments, taken from the Nature, the Precepts, and the Example of God himself, the great Duty of brotherly Love, to be express'd in all Acts of Humanity and Charity. And here in the Gospel for the Day, St. Luke sets forth the extreme Danger of neglecting this Duty, or casting it off by Hardheartedness and Inhumanity. And this he doth here in these words; *There was a certain rich Man, &c.* The Words are understood by some

as a History ; by others, and that the greater Number, as a Parable, wherein are symbolically represented the different State and Condition of good and bad Men in the next World ; that is, the great Miseries that will follow abus'd Prosperity, and likewise the unspeakable Comforts that attend an honest, humble, and afflicted Poverty : Both which are here plainly set forth. Where we are to consider,

First, The Persons here related, and they are *Dives* and *Lazarus*, the poor and the rich Man : with the different Carriage and Behaviour of each. And,

Secondly, The different Fate or End of both : which things contain the Substance and Design of this Parable.

First then, The Parable begins with an Account of a certain rich Man, nam'd *Dives*, who was clothed in Purple and fine Linen, and far'd sumptuously every Day : which is a brief Description of one swimming in all manner of Plenty and Luxury ; and deck'd in all the Gaiety and Gallantry that this World can afford ; his Apparel consisting of Purple, the Clothing of Princes ; and fine Linen, the gorgeous Attire of Courts and Palaces. Accordingly *Babylon* with its Riches is describ'd by a great City cloth'd in fine Linen, and Purple, and Scarlet, and deck'd with Gold, and precious Stones and Pearls ; Rev. 18. 16. For his Diet, that is describ'd by his faring sumptuously every Day ; meaning, that his Table was daily spread with all manner of rich and costly Provisions ; the Air, the Sea, and the Land were ransack'd to furnish him with all sorts of Dainties and Varieties. In a word, both his Dishes and his Dresses were set forth with the utmost Pomp and Bravery, all which he enjoy'd and indulg'd himself in, without the least Regard to, or Relief of the Wants and Necessities of others. Again,

The next Verse tells us, of a certain Beggar nam'd *Lazarus*, who was laid at his Gate full of Sores, and desiring to be fed with the Crumbs that fell from the rich Man's Table : Moreover, the Dogs came and lick'd his Sores. This is a Description of one sinking under the greatest Burden of earthly Misery and Distress, and groaning under the pinching Necessities of Hunger and Thirst : his Body full of Sores, and yet expos'd to the sharp and open Air, without any Friend to succour or help him ; insomuch that the very Dogs

Dogs came and lick'd his Sores; his Flesh pining away for lack of the Crumbs that fell from the Rich Man's Table, and having nothing to satisfy the Wants and Cravings of his Nature. This poor Man in this sad Condition was laid at the rich Man's Gate, in hopes of some Relief; but found none from that hard-hearted Wretch, tho his Desires were so modest, as to ask only for Crumbs to comfort and support him: yea, the very Dogs that ate the Crumbs under the Table, shew'd more Compassion than he, for they came and lick'd his Sores, when the Master shew'd no manner of Pity.

By which we see the different and unequal Fortunes, States and Conditions of Men in this World, some flowing in all manner of Affluence and Plenty, and others labouring under the Calamities of Want and Scarcity: and likewise the different Tempers and Dispositions of Men here, some commiserating and relieving, others slighting and turning the deaf Ear to the loudest Cries and Wants of the Needy: both which are so well known, as to need no insisting on. But,

Secondly, What follow'd hereupon? Why, the next words acquaint us, that *the Beggar soon after died*. Perhaps starv'd with Hunger, and perishing for lack of Necessaries: but however that be, the poor Man *was carry'd by Angels into Abraham's Bosom*; the place of Rest and Peace, where the Souls of good Men go after Death, and remain till the Resurrection and Day of Judgment: call'd sometimes Paradise, where our Saviour's Soul, with that of the penitent Thief, went after their Crucifixion; and here 'tis call'd *Abraham's Bosom*, a Mansion for those blessed Souls, that depart hence in the Lord, where they rest from their Labours, and abide in a comfortable Expectation of farther Bliss and Glory: and this our Saviour foretold should be the Portion of sound Believers, to sit down with *Abraham, &c.* *Mat. 8. 11, &c.*

And it came to pass (saith the Parable) *that the Rich Man also died and was buried*. Death is the common Lot of all Mankind; Poor and Rich, Base and Honourable, none are exempted from that fatal Stroke, but all meet in the House appointed for all the living. There the Dust of one Man will not give place to the Dust of another, but all lie promiscuously mingled and shuffled together; and they who have fared most deliciously, become but the fatter Feast for

Worms. Riches cannot bribe or put off Death, nor can any Man's Wealth and Plenty secure him from the Grave, but rather sink him the sooner into it; their Table oftentimes becomes a Snare to catch themselves withal, and what was intended for their good, proves many times an occasion of falling. So we read here, *The Rich Man also died, and was buried.* We heard nothing before of the Poor Man's Burial, and perhaps he had none, but pass'd away in the same Silence and Obscurity in which he lived, his Meanness and Poverty not amounting to the Charges of a Funeral. But of the Rich Man 'tis here said, that he died and *was buried*; and he, no doubt, had a solemn and splendid Funeral, suitable to the Pomp and Grandeur in which he lived, having all the Ceremonies of State and Mourning that commonly attend and adorn such Solemnities.

But what became of this Rich Man after Death? Why, he was carry'd into Hell, the Place of Misery and Torment, where the departed Souls of wicked Men go and remain till the Day of Judgment. He was not carry'd by Angels (as the poor Man was) into *Abraham's Bosom*, there to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven; but was hurry'd away by evil Spirits into *everlasting Fire*, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels. There, nothing of his Pomp, only the Punishment of his Cruelty and Ingratitude follow'd him; where he found no Mercy, because he never shew'd any: for *in Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his Bosom.* Which words are not to be understood literally, as if they could see one another at the distance of those places; for we are told after, that between them *there is a great Gulf fix'd*, so that the bodily Eye cannot reach to the beholding or discerning each other so far. And therefore the Words are to be understood figuratively, as an Aggravation of *Dives's* Misery, to find himself so grievously tormented, when *Lazarus* whom he despis'd was seated in a place of endless Joy and Happiness. This he knew by some Revelation or other, and the Thoughts and Envy of it rack'd his Breast, and fill'd it with Horrour and Despair. And indeed it must be a very great Addition to the Torments of the Damned, at once to feel their own Tortures, and know the eternal Joys and Blessedness of others. In this desperate and deplorable Condition, *Dives* is represented as one that cry'd and said, *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip*
of

of his Finger in Water, and cool my Tongue; for I am tormented in this Flame. These words are still to be taken figuratively; for such a Communication cannot be suppos'd between Paradise and Hell, as to send Messages, to receive Answers, or to hear Discourses from the one place to the other; much less can it be imagin'd, that one should go from *Abraham's Bosom* to carry Water on the tip of his Finger, to cool the Tongue of another in Hell. But these Expressions are used, the farther to heighten and represent the Misery and Condemnation of the Wicked in the other World: that *Dives*, who refus'd to hear the Cries of *Lazarus*, should be forc'd to cry himself for some Relief from him, and to beg Mercy from him, to whom he would shew none: that he who deny'd a Crumb of Bread or a Drop of Beer out of his Abundance to a poor Beggar, should be himself driven to ask a Drop of Water in his extreme Want; and that too to cool his Tongue with a little Water, which he had before inflam'd with too much Wine. Which things are here related in a parabolical way, to shew the Danger of such a hard-hearted Temper, and the suitable Punishments that will follow upon such unmerciful Practices.

But what Answer did the Rich Man receive in this his great Necessity? Why, that the following words declare: *Abraham* said unto him, *Son*, remember that thou in thy Life-time receiv'dst thy good things, and likewise *Lazarus* evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Where the Term *Son* is us'd not to signify that he was a true Son of *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful; for then he would have been receiv'd into *Abraham's Bosom*: but 'tis a vulgar manner or kind of speaking, accommodated to the Tenor of this Narration, wherein 'tis usual to call one another by the name of Sons or Brethren. But in answer to his Request, he tells him what he was now in Reason and Justice to expect; for he had receiv'd his Portion of good things in the Plenty and Abundance of earthly things, which he had already enjoy'd and spent upon himself in his life-time, without imparting any of it to the Necessities of others: and on the other hand, *Lazarus* hath had his Portion of evil things in the Hardships and Afflictions he hath already sustain'd in this World. And therefore 'tis but Justice and Equity, that *Lazarus* should be now rewarded for the evil things which he so patiently endur'd; and thou punish'd for the good things thou hast so wickedly abus'd.

In this Answer of faithful *Abraham* we may observe two or three things :

1st, That there is some Portion of good things belonging to every one, which he is to receive either in this World or in the next ; for we being all God's Creatures and Children, he reckons himself oblig'd to provide and take care of us, and at least to give to each a Child's Portion. Beside, there is none so abandon'd to Sin and Wickedness, but hath something of Good in him, some commendable Quality or other, to which something of a Reward is in a manner due : And these are here and elsewhere call'd a Man's good things. Again, there is a Portion of evil things belonging to every Man, which he is to receive either here or hereafter : for as there is none so bad but hath something of good in him, which God as a kind Father rewards with good things ; so there is none so good, but hath something of Evil in him, which God as a just Judg punishes with evil things : and these are here said to be his evil things. Now he that receives all his good things here in this Life, without any Allay or Mixture of Sufferings for his bad Deeds, hath all his Portion of Good in this World, and shall receive the Punishment of his Evil in the World to come. As on the other side, he that hath receiv'd his evil things in the Sufferings and Troubles of this Life, shall receive the Reward of his good Deeds in the next. This is the Case here between *Dives* and *Lazarus*, where *Abraham* bids *Dives* remember, that *he in his life-time had receiv'd his good things, and Lazarus evil things ; and therefore Lazarus is comforted, and he is tormented.* And this may teach us, that Prosperity is not always a sign of God's Favour, nor Adversity of his Frowns, for the one may be given in Wrath, and the other in Love ; and therefore we should not be lifted up with Prosperity, nor cast down with Adversity, or in any Affliction that may befall us.

2^{dly}, We may observe here, that 'tis not the possessing, no nor the spending of Riches, that is the Cause of these future Torments, but the doing both in a wrong way ; 'tis the ill getting, and the ill using of Wealth, that bring on these heavy Punishments. *Dives* was condemn'd to Hell not for being rich, but for spending his Riches in Luxury and Vanity, when he saw others to want Necessaries, without giving them any Relief. His sumptuous Fare and gorgeous Attire had been innocent enough, had he fed the Hungry with what was left, and cover'd the Naked with his

with his cast Clothes: but his strutting in Purple and fine Linen, when *Lazarus* was naked and shivering, and ready to die with the cold; his denying him the Crumbs of his Table, when he was just perishing at his doors, was such a piece of Hardheartedness, as justly deserv'd the greatest Torments. However, Riches are not to be blamed for the Faults of the Owners; for they are the Blessings of God, and capable of serving many good Ends. If we use the good things of this Life well, they will bring us to much better in the next; 'tis only the Abuse of them here, that dooms us to evil things hereafter. And therefore our Care should be, not only to get the Wealth and Substance of this World, but to have Hearts to use and employ it aright, that it may tend to our present Comfort, and the Increase of our future Felicity.

3dly, We may observe farther, that as 'tis not the possessing, but the abusing of Riches, that brings on future Torments; so 'tis not Poverty only, but a pious and patient Behaviour under it, that intitles to future Comforts. 'Twas not Poverty alone that carry'd *Lazarus* into *Abraham's* Bosom, but a Poverty attended with an honest, meek, and contented Mind: for he did not open his mouth in Murmuring, Lying, or Blaspheming, nor reach out his Hand to Picking and Stealing; but quietly resign'd himself to God's Disposal, and trusted in his Providence for a Deliverance when he should see fit. If a poor Man be a Thief or a Lyar, proud and impatient, and a Contemner of God and good things, his unsanctify'd Poverty will not help him, he hath forfeited all title to Favour; and to the evil things he hath receiv'd here, will be added much worse hereafter. In short, *Dives* was tormented, not for being rich, but for being hard-hearted and unmerciful, for spending all his Wealth upon his own Vanities, and sparing nothing to the Relief of *Lazarus's* Necessities: And *Lazarus* was comforted not barely for being poor, but for patiently submitting to God's Will, casting his Care upon him in well-doing, and waiting for a Recompence of his Sufferings in God's due time.

The Sense then of *Abraham's* Answer to *Dives* is, to shew that wicked Men, who prosper in their Wickedness, have all their Portion in the good things of this Life; and for their abusing and mispending of them now, shall receive nothing but the evil things of Misery and Punishment in the World to come: and likewise that they who have their

108 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the
their Portion in the Afflictions and Troubles of this World,
shall be recompens'd with better things at the Resurrection
of the Just.

As to that part of *Dives's* Request, to send *Lazarus* with
a little Relief to ease his Torments, *Abraham* replies far-
ther, that *between us and you there is a great Gulf fixed, so*
that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither
can they pass to us, that would come from you. Which words
relate either to the Distance of the Places between them,
which would admit of no Correspondence, or passing from
the one to the other; or else to that irreversible Decree
past upon them, whereby 'twas utterly impossible to give
them any Relief in their Condition, or to get them a Re-
lease for one moment out of their miserable State; for the
Gates of Mercy were then shut, and 'twas in vain to ask
for that now, which should have been done sooner. Here-
upon,

Dives finding his Torments to be endless, easeless, and
remediless, said unto *Abraham*, *I pray thee therefore, Father,*
that thou wouldst send him to my Father's House, for I have
five Brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also
come into this place of Torment. Which words are still para-
bolical, and signify, not that there is so much Charity and
Goodness in Hell, as to call Men to Repentance, and to
caution others to avoid that place of Torment, in which
they had unhappily plung'd themselves: but the Design of
those words was, to enhance the Misery and Torments of
the Damned, that they were so great, that they could not
bear them themselves, nor would they wish them to their
greatest Enemies, and much less to their Friends and Rela-
tions. However, *Abraham* replies to him, that they have
sufficient warning already in those matters; for *they have*
Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them. They may
daily read or hear these expounded to them, and by God's
Ministers are frequently call'd upon to reform and amend
their Lives out of the Scriptures. *Nay, but Father Abra-*
ham, (saith he) if one went unto them from the Dead, they
will repent. Such an unusual thing would prevail more
with them, than all the common and ordinary Means are
wont to do. A Messenger from the Dead, that related to
them, from his own Sight and Knowledg, the dreadful
Punishments of the Wicked in the other World, would be
much more minded and hearken'd to, than the remote
and silent Notices of *Moses* and the Prophets; yea, such an
Eye-

Gospel for the first Sunday after Trinity. 109

Eye-witness to testify these things, would in all probability work more, and leave deeper Impressions upon Mens Minds, than all the Discourses of those that never saw them. To which *Abraham* rejoin'd again;

If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho one rose from the Dead. Which words plainly suppose,

1st, That they had sufficient Revelations of a future State, together with the Happiness and Misery that follows and belongs to it.

2^{dly}, That 'tis our Duty to hearken to and be directed by them, without seeking or desiring any new or farther Revelations. And,

3^{dly}, If we are not convinc'd by the Revelations already made in God's Word, we shall not be persuaded by any other, no not if one rise from the Dead. For the

1st, I say, that God hath made sufficient Discoveries to us of the Happiness and Misery of a future State, and summ'd up the whole of our Duty with relation to both, notify'd and confirm'd to us in the Holy Scriptures. *They have Moses and the Prophets* (saith *Abraham*) which was a far better Light than that of natural Reason; by which yet the Heathens had some, tho obscure, Notices of the Rewards and Punishments of another Life: but we, beside them, have Christ and his Apostles, who have given us much clearer and brighter Revelations of these Truths than they had, and *have brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. *He hath shew'd, O Man,* (saith the Prophet) *what is good, and what the Lord thy God requires of thee; namely, to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God:* Mic. 6. 8. So that he hath not been wanting to us in delivering his Mind and our Duty to us, having plainly shew'd us both our Work and our Wages. And therefore,

2^{dly}, 'Tis manifestly our Duty to receive and hearken to what God hath already told us, without seeking or desiring any new Revelations. *They have Moses and the Prophets* (saith *Abraham*) *let them hear them;* and we have Christ and his Apostles, let us much more hear and attend to them. Now by hearing of both, is here meant,

(1.) A thorow and stedfast Belief of what they have deliver'd to us. For 'tis not the bare hearing or the outward professing of it, that *Abraham* here speaks of; but 'tis to have our Understandings thorowly convinc'd of the
Truth

110 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

Truth of it, and to have this Belief firmly rooted and settled in our Minds. The Jews heard Christ and his Apostles expounding *Moses* and the Prophets to them, but it had no effect upon them, because they believ'd it not. So the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, that *the Word preach'd profited not, because it was not mix'd with Faith in them that heard it.* And there are many still, who are not so thoroughly persuaded of Divine Truths as they ought: And therefore,

(2.) To hear *Moses* and the Prophets, and other present Revelations, is not only to believe, but seriously to consider and to be directed by them: and they that are so, will soon find that there will be no need or use of any other.

And this is the last Thing here to be briefly spoken to, viz. That if we are not convinc'd by the ordinary standing Revelations of God's Word, we shall not be persuaded by one that comes from the Dead. Some are apt to think, that a Messenger from the Dead would work more upon them, than all the Books and Exhortations of the Living: And that because such a Messenger would give them the Certainty of another Life, of which they cannot be otherwise so well persuaded.

Again, One coming from Hell would testify the Truth of such a Place, and the Torments thereof.

Moreover, One coming from *Abraham's Bosom*, may certify us of the Rest and Happiness of such a Place.

But that all these things are otherwise, appears, first, Because this Experiment hath been already try'd without effect; for Christ the Son of God rose from the Grave, and came from the Dead, to confirm his Doctrine, and to acquaint us with the Affairs of the other World, and yet the Jews would neither receive or believe in him.

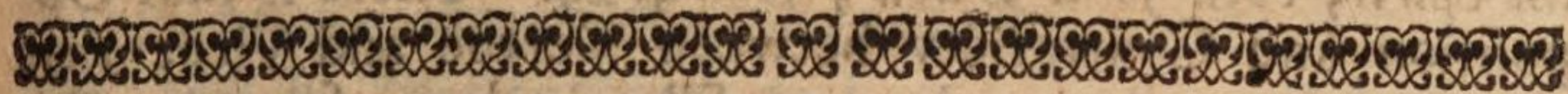
Beside, The coming of any from the Dead, is no likely or proper means of giving any satisfaction: for this is a way liable to great Doubts and Uncertainties, and many have been impos'd upon by Tales of Ghosts and Apparitions.

Again, The coming of any from the Dead is more apt to terrify and affright, than to convince any. When our Saviour first appear'd to his Disciples after his Resurrection, 'tis said they were terrify'd and affrighted, as if they had seen a Spirit: and that put him to as much pains to satisfy them of the Reality of his Person, as of the Truth of his Doctrine. Beside, Men may and will easily find Shifts and

Eva-

Epistle for the second Sunday after Trinity. III

Evasions to mar the Force of such Arguments. Add to this, that God hath no where promis'd to send any from the Dead upon such an Errand, nor will'd us to trust or hearken to them, and much less to desire or expect these Expresses. In a word, a settled standing Revelation is of more certainty and better use, than any such Messages from the Dead; the former being well confirm'd to us by Miracles and a Voice from Heaven, the latter liable to all the Cheats and Impostures of Hell. And therefore let us rest satisfy'd and contented with the Revelations that God hath given us in the Holy Scriptures, and make a right Use of them; and then there will be no need of any other to guide us into Truth, and to bring us to Heaven.



DISCOURSE XIV.

The EPISTLE for the Second Sunday after
Trinity.

I John iii. 13, to the end.

Marvel not, my Brethren, if the World hate you. We know that we have passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren: he that loveth not his Brother, abideth in Death; whosoever hateth his Brother, is a Murderer, &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of the never-failing Care of God Almighty, to help and govern them, whom he brings up in his stedfast Fear and Love; and thence beseeches him to keep us under the Protection of his good Providence, and to make us have a perpetual Fear and Love of his Holy Name.

To which end, the beloved Disciple, in the Epistle for this Day, first warns all good Christians of the Hatred and Malice of the World against them; after which, he shews the blessed Fruits of a true Love to the Brethren, together with the mischievous Effects of Hatred and Ill-will towards them;

them; concluding with some Marks and Directions for the satisfying and assuring our Consciences in these Matters.

The Epistle begins with a Caution to good Christians to expect, and to arm themselves against the Hatred of the World, in these words, *Marvel not, my Brethren, if the World hate you.* The occasion of this Warning was from what was said in the foregoing Verse, of *Cain's* killing his Brother *Abel*; and that for no other reason, but *because his own Works were evil, and his Brother's good*: for which reason he bids them not to wonder, or be surpriz'd, if the same Lot befall them from the like Persons. The World bears such Ill-will to good Men, that 'tis no marvel if they meet with Hatred and hard Usage from them; for *as he that was born after the Flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now*; Gal. 4. 29. There is that Opposition and Contrariety between Vertue and Vice, that they cannot well accord or consist together; for *what Fellowship (saith the Apostle) hath Light with Darknes? Or what Concord hath Christ with Belial?* And therefore Christ told his Disciples, *If the World hate you, know that it hated me before it hated you; if ye were of the World, the World would love his own; but because ye are not of the World, but I have chosen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you*: John 15. 18, 19. And elsewhere, at his sending them forth, he declar'd, that he sent them forth as Sheep among Wolves; meaning, that the World would bear the same Enmity and Hatred to them, and likewise have the same Designs upon them, as the ravenous Wolf hath upon the innocent Sheep, namely, to divide and devour them. And therefore St. Peter warns Christians not to *think it strange concerning the fiery Trial, as if some new and strange thing had happen'd unto them*; 1 Pet. 4. 12. for the wicked World would malign and persecute them. This is the common Lot of the Righteous here, to try their Patience and Constancy; and therefore we may not wonder at it, but rather look for and provide against it.

Now the beloved Disciple, having thus warn'd and forearm'd us against the Hatred of the World, proceeds to shew the great Benefit that will accrue to us from loving one another; for 'tis a Mark of our Regeneration, and gives us to understand that we are enter'd upon a new and spiritual Life: *We know (saith he) that we have passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren.* He that finds or feels this loving and charitable Disposition towards his Neighbour,

Epistle for the second Sunday after Trinity. 113

bour, hath the Seeds of Grace sown in his Heart, which will quicken him to a spiritual Life of Grace here, and that will shortly grow up into an eternal Life of Glory hereafter: Whereas, *He that loveth not his Brother, abideth in Death*; he is void of all spiritual Life, and remains still dead in Trespases and Sins. This he confirms in the next words, *for whosoever hateth his Brother is a Murderer; and we know that no Murderer hath eternal Life abiding in him.* He that hateth his Brother, conceives Mischief against him in his Heart, which when opportunity offers is ready to break forth in Slaughter and Bloodshed; so it did with *Cain*, whose Hatred and Envy led him on to slay his Brother *Abel*. Hence our Saviour in *Mat. 5.* interprets the hating of another to be the killing of him, because 'tis so in the Intention of the Heart, did not some outward Curb restrain him from it; and he that harbours such mischievous and murderous Intentions or Desires, can have nothing of the Temper of a good Christian, and much less any spiritual Life abiding in him: for he that truly loves another, will rather lay down his own Life for him, than take away his; so Christ manifested his Love to us, and would have us do in like manner: *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because he laid down his Life for us; and we ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren.* Christ loved us even to Death, which he yielded to for our sakes; and he hath requir'd us, if need be, to venture our Lives for one another.

But how contrary to this is the Practice of such, who are so far from laying down their Lives for the Brethren, that they will scarce lay out any of their superfluous Substance to save their Lives, or support them under their Necessities? such as these can have nothing of the Love of God or their Brother rooted in them. So *St. John's* Question here plainly intimates; *Whoso hath this World's Goods, and seeth his Brother have need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?* He that is so sparing of a little part of his Substance to help his Brother in time of need, will be much more sparing of his Blood to serve him; both which are apparent Proofs of his want of any true Love to God or his Neighbour: and therefore the Apostle exhorts in the next words, to give better Demonstrations of our Love to both, saying, *My little Children, let us not love in Word, or in Tongue only, but in Deed and Truth.* True Love consists not in talking or boasting with the Mouth, but in the good Wishes of the

Vol. IV. Part 2. I Heart,

Heart, and the Bounty of the Hand: it lies not in Compliments, or in the outward Flourish of Words, but in Actions, and the visible Performance of good Works, without which all is no better than Hypocrisy and Dissimulation. Judas could say, *Hail Master*, and kiss our Saviour, when he was just about to betray him; and much like this are the Friendships of the World, who are never more forward to say, Your humble Servant, than when they design most Evil, and are just ready to over-reach or undermine their Neighbour. St. James puts the Case, *If a Brother or Sister be naked, or destitute of daily Food, and one of you say unto him, Depart in Peace, be you warmed and filled, and notwithstanding give him not what is needful for the Body; what doth it profit?* Jam. 2. 15, 16. Such good words afford no Profit to them to whom they are given, nor will they afford any more to him that gives them; and therefore our Love must sink deeper than the Tongue, it must be rooted in the Heart, and from thence spring up and appear in the good Fruits of Beneficence and Charity: for *hereby* (saith our Apostle) *we shall know, that we are of the Truth, and shall assure our Hearts before him;* meaning, that we shall hereby approve our selves to be true and sincere Christians, such as we profess our selves to be, and no Hypocrites, who are wont to give good Words and fair Speeches, but falsify in their Deeds and Actions: whereas when our Words and Deeds go together, we shall shew the Truth of our Profession, and approve our selves not only unto Men, who can judg only by the outward Appearance, but unto God, who knoweth the Heart, and will judg us by the inward Inclinations and Intentions of it.

Now from hence our Apostle takes occasion to set forth,

First, The great Evil and Danger of an accusing Conscience in this Matter, in these words; *If our Hearts condemn us, God is greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all things.* And,

Secondly, The great Benefit and Comfort of an absolving Conscience, in the following words; *Beloved, if our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.* Both which being of great Use and Importance to us, will deserve to be particularly consider'd. And,

First, Of the Evil and Danger of an accusing Conscience; *If our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth*

Epistle for the second Sunday after Trinity. 115

knoweth all things: where 'tis suppos'd that the Heart or Conscience of a Man may and often does accuse him for the lack of that Love to God and his Neighbour, which he ought to bear and shew to both. Thus, for Example, when a Man wilfully omits his Duty to God, by neglecting his Prayers, or turning his back upon his Word and Sacraments, or when he wilfully commits what God hath forbidden him, by profaning his Name, or polluting his Sabbath; Conscience must and will take him aside, and rate him soundly by himself.

Again, When a Man violates his Duty to his Neighbour by Acts of Fraud, Rapine, Oppression or Uncharitableness, his Heart will secretly smite and reprehend him for these things; and tho he may escape any earthly Tribunal, yet Conscience, as God's Deputy, will arraign and sit in Judgment upon him, yea and condemn and pass Sentence upon him for such Enormities, how secretly or cunningly soever they have been acted or conceal'd by him. This is so well known and felt too by the vilest and boldest Offenders, that it needs no other Proof than the retiring into their own Breasts, and consulting their own Experience in these Matters. *Judas* found it to his own Ruin for betraying his Saviour, and others have found the same for shedding innocent Blood; yea, the most profligate Sinners have not been able to escape these sharp Girds and Twitches of a gall'd and guilty Mind.

But the present Anguish of a guilty Conscience is nothing to the future Vengeance that attends it; for *if our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things*: He is greater in Knowledg, and knows more by us than we do by our selves; he is greater in Power, and can do more to punish than we can; he is greater in Justice, and will be more impartial than our Hearts will be to us. There are many Failures of Duty both to God and Man, that often escape our own Observation, and so give us little or no trouble, which yet are recorded in the Book of God's Remembrance, and must be accounted for; there are many vain Thoughts, rash Words, and unadvis'd Actions that pass away unregarded, which yet are perfectly known to God, and will come into the Reckoning of the last Day. So that if our own Hearts condemn us for that which we know by our selves, God will surely condemn us, who knoweth much more; our Hearts may condemn us for things that fall not under the Cognizance of any earthly Tribunal;

Tribunal; for *who knoweth the things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man that is in him?* 1 Cor. 2. 11. But God will condemn us for things that slip the Censure and Condemnation of our own Hearts, and will arraign us at his Tribunal, for Matters that escape not only earthly Courts, but the Bar of our own Conscience.

Indeed, where Conscience condemns, there God will condemn also, because God and Conscience judg by the same Rule; and Conscience being God's Vicegerent, to judg for and under him, he will approve the Proceedings, and confirm the Sentence of our own Hearts.

But tho God always condemns where Conscience does, yet he sometimes goes farther, and condemns where that doth not: for his is a higher Court, that searches deeper into Matters than any earthly Powers can; yea, to this all Principalities and Powers must submit, and from this there lies no Appeal.

In short, God Almighty, the great Judg of all the Earth, will ratify the Sentence of his Deputy; and where our Hearts condemn us for any known Breaches of his Laws, there he will do the same; but he being greater than our Hearts, and knowing more, where Conscience is either ignorant or silent, he will add to and carry the Condemnation higher: which shews the Misery of a mis-giving and self-condemning Heart, and may teach us with *St. Paul* to exercise our selves herein, to keep a Conscience void of Offence both towards God and Man. And this will lead me, in the next place, to consider,

Secondly, The Comfort and Happiness of a clear and absolving Conscience, from these words; *Beloved, if our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God*: where a good Conscience is describ'd by the Heart's not condemning us; which can only be from a Consciousness of our own Innocence, or a Freedom from any Guilt. When we cannot charge our selves with the wilful Violation of God's Laws, but can reflect upon our Ways without Remorse, and our Minds approve and acquit us for what we have done; then are we said to have an absolving, clear and good Conscience.

But who can say, *His Heart is clean, I am free from Sin?* Does not the *righteous Man* fall several times a day? And if we think or say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us: How then can our Hearts forbear to condemn us for such frequent and daily Miscarriages? In

Epistle for the second Sunday after Trinity. 117

In answer to this, it is true, that no Man liveth and sinneth not; and should Conscience proceed upon the strict Rules of Justice, and pronounce Sentence accordingly, there is no Man's Heart but must condemn him: for the best of Men have reason to confess daily (as the Church directs) "That they have left undone things which they ought to have done; and have done things which they ought not to have done:" and if our Judge should be extreme to mark all that is done amiss, who could abide it? None could stand the Trial of Conscience here, or abide the severer Trial of God hereafter. But for our Comfort, we may know,

That neither God nor Conscience do or will judge us by the strict Rules of Justice, but proceed herein by the Measures of Mercy, and the milder Terms of the Gospel, by which no involuntary Failings can ever hurt us, and greater Offences, if repented of and amended, shall never be laid to our Charge; for *there is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* If we avoid the Sollicitation of sensual Lusts, and give up our selves to the Conduct of God's Holy Spirit, our Hearts will not condemn us, and much less will God, the Searcher of Hearts, suffer us to come into Condemnation. Holy Job declares, that by *holding fast his Integrity, his Heart should not reproach him as long as he lived*; Job 27. 5, 6. Neither will our Hearts condemn us whilst we faithfully discharge our Duty to the utmost of our power. And this, our Apostle here tells us, will give us *Confidence towards God*; that is, it gives us reasonable Grounds of Hope or Assurance, that God will not lay any thing to our Charge, but will acquit us at the last and great Day: which may abundantly convince us of the vast Benefit and Comfort of a good Conscience.

The Word here render'd *Confidence towards God*, is in the Original *παρρησία*, which signifies Freedom of Access, or Boldness of Speech; and gives us to understand, that a Heart set right towards God, and that cannot lay any great Matter to our Charge, may encourage us to draw nigh to him with the Confidence of Children to their heavenly Father, and to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, for Grace to help in time of need. *Heb. 4. 16.*

Being well assur'd (as St. John here tells us) that *whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*; meaning,

ing, that God will certainly hear our Prayers, and give us whatever we ask agreeable to his Will, and suitable to our Necessities: for by keeping his Commandments we please him, and while we do so, he hath oblig'd himself by Promise to hear and help us. So that if we are conscious of the Sincerity and Singleness of our Heart, whatever Failings we may have, we may draw nigh to God in full Assurance of Faith, having this Confidence, that in whatsoever we ask, he will hear us.

And the Commandments he requires us to keep to this end, are believing in Christ, and loving one another; so the next words declare, *And this is his Commandment, that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us Commandment.* These are the principal Acts of Obedience that he exacts from us, namely, to hold fast our Profession of Faith in Christ, and to perform the Duties we owe to our Brethren, as Christ hath taught and commanded us.

And to confirm us in this Confidence towards God, he adds what he had before often told us, that *he that keepeth his Commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him*; that is, he is in a manner ingrafted and incorporated into Christ, as the Branches are in the Vine, and receives the Influences of Grace from him, as the Members do from the Head, being united to him by the Bond of Love and Charity. And that we may not want a Mark to try our selves by, the Apostle adds in the Close, *Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit, which he hath given us*: This is the Seal whereby the Lord knoweth who are his; 'tis the Touchstone to try our Sincerity, and to discern whether we belong to him. God resideth with his Holy Spirit, and if we feel the Blessed Fruits and Graces of it within us, we may safely conclude, that God abideth in us, and we in him.

This is the Substance of this Day's Epistle; from which we may learn,

1st, Not to be surpriz'd or dejected at the Hatred or Malice of the World. Our Apostle bids us *not to marvel*, or be troubled at it; for the Hatred of the World is rather a Sign of the Love of God, than any Mark of his Displeasure: *The Friendship of the World is Enmity with God*; and *if we love the World, or have the Love of it, the Love of the Father is not in us*. Our best Wisdom is to secure as much as possible the Love of God, and then to overlook and despise

Epistle for the second Sunday vster Trinity. 119

spise the Hatred of Men; for greater is he (saith the Apostle) *that is in us, than he that is in the World.*

2dly, To secure to us the Love of God, let us cherish a true and unfeign'd Love to the Brethren. This is the way here and elsewhere prescrib'd to that end: he that loves his Brother is pass'd from Death to Life, but he that hateth him abideth in Death; yea, St. John here tells us, that *he that hateth his Brother is a Murderer*: he beareth that Rancour and Malice in his Heart, that when opportunity offers is apt to break out in Mischief and Slaughter, and we know that no such one hath any spiritual or eternal Life abiding in him; which should teach us to empty our Hearts of all such black Passions, and to harbour nothing but Kindness and Charity.

3dly, Let us so fix our Minds in the Love of God and our Neighbour, that our Hearts may not condemn us for lack of either; for if our Hearts condemn us, God, who is greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all things, will ratify the Sentence, and condemn us much more.

4thly, Let us labour for a calm, clear and absolving Conscience, and that will give us Confidence towards God; it will give us Confidence in our Prayers, and make us go boldly to him for a Supply of what we want, and a Blessing upon what we do. In a word, that our Hearts may not condemn us, let us abandon all base and unworthy things, and keep steddy to the immutable Rules of Honesty and Vertue, so shall we have the Testimony of a good Conscience; which will be the best Cordial at the Hour of Death, and the best Friend at the Day of Judgment.





DISCOURSE XV.

The GOSPEL for the Second Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Luke xiv. 16——25.

A certain Man made a great Supper, and bade many, and sent his Servant at Supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready; and they all, with one Consent, began to make Excuse, &c.

IN this Gospel our Blessed Saviour, according to his usual way of instructing the People, sets forth in a Parable the liberal Provisions he hath made in the Gospel for all that will come to him; as also the Way and Manner of his inviting them; together with the Danger of refusing his Invitations: of each of which particularly.

The Gospel and the Parable too begin thus; *A certain Man made a great Supper, and bade many.* This certain Man is by St. *Matthew*, in reciting the same Parable, said to be a certain King; *Chap. 22. 2.* This great Supper here is, by the other Evangelists, said to be a great Feast made at the Marriage of his Son, which is wont to be sumptuous and magnificent: both which signify to us the ample and glorious Entertainment that God the Father hath made and offer'd to us by his Son; and that not only in the general Provisions of the whole Gospel, but more particularly in the Heavenly Feast of the Holy Eucharist: wherein he gives us not the common and ordinary Bread of the Earth, but *Bread from Heaven, the Bread of Life*, which alone can feed our Souls to Life eternal. He presents us with Dainties far above the Quails and Manna of the *Israelites*, yea above Angels Food, even the Body and Blood of his dear Son, as a Token of his Love, and the Means of our Reconciliation: which great things affording both Plenty and Pleasure, are here represented by a Supper or Marriage-Feast, an Entertainment

tainment commonly attended with great Joy and many Endearments.

To this great Feast or Supper the Parable adds, *He bade many*; which signifies that general and generous Invitation or Offer of all the Mercies of the Gospel to all that will receive and accept of them. *Ho, every one that thirsteth* (saith the Prophet) *come ye to the Waters, and he that hath no Mony, come ye buy and eat; yea, come buy Wine and Milk without Mony, and without Price: Isa. 55. 1.* This was a Prophecy or Promise of those gracious Tenders of Mercy and Salvation, that should be made by the Messias in the latter Days, which should be free to all that would come upon his kind Invitation. The Call is earnest, and repeated several times, being bidden to come three times in one Verse; and lest any should keep back for their Poverty and Meanness, he bids them come buy and eat Bread without Mony, and likewise to come buy and drink Wine without Price. Their Hunger and Thirst were the main Qualifications look'd for, and their hearty Acceptance was all the Price that was expected.

Accordingly we find this gracious Promise and Prophecy fulfil'd by our Blessed Saviour in his free and frequent Calls upon Sinners to come to him, and to accept of Life and Salvation from him: *Come unto me* (saith he) *all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you Rest; Mat. 11. 29.* Yea, we find him blaming and bewailing the Folly of such as refuse it, saying with some Trouble and Concern, *You will not come unto me, that ye may have Life*; with many other Expostulations to the same purpose: All which shew us the infinite Love of Christ to Mankind, in providing such great and good things for them, and likewise in so earnestly and importunately inviting us to accept of them.

But who are the Messengers employ'd to bid the Guests to this great Supper? Why, *St. Luke* here makes mention of but one Servant, but *St. Matthew* of more. By the sending of one Servant here, may perhaps be meant God the Father's sending his Son with the Offers of Grace and Mercy: By the sending of more Servants, mention'd by *St. Matthew*, may be meant Christ's sending his Apostles and Ministers upon the same Errand; who as Ambassadors in Christ's stead beseech us in his Name to partake of the Feast of fat things prepar'd for them.

The Words of the Invitation to them that were bidden are, *Come, for all things are now ready.* *St. Matthew* adds,
Behold

Behold the Oxen and the Fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, Come unto the Marriage: meaning, that the Sacrifice is slain, the Feast is prepar'd, and the Table is deck'd with all kind of Provisions; so that there lacketh nothing but the Guests to sit down: and therefore hasten away, and defer not to come, being so lovingly call'd and bidden by God himself; for your Company is expected, and you may be well assur'd of a hearty Welcome to your Lord's Table.

But what Answer did the Guests return to so kind an Invitation? Why, the Answer in St. *Matthew* was, that *they would not come*. A rude and ungrateful Answer indeed! for who could have thought that so great Love and Kindness should be so unworthily requited, or so unthankfully rejected? especially considering the great Honour of feasting with the Son of God, the unspeakable Pleasure and Delight that must be found in such Company, together with the infinite Benefit and Comfort that attend so heavenly an Entertainment: all which, if duly weigh'd, will afford Motives and Encouragements enough to a chearful and thankful Acceptance. Whereas such a rude Refusal of the Divine Favours must necessarily incense, and so great an Indignity justly raise the greatest Indignation. Which of you in such a case would not be mov'd? (saith our Church in the Exhortation to the Communion) who would not resent this as a great Injury and Unkindness done to him? And is not the Affront much greater when done to God, than when it is done to Men? And will he (think you) take that at our hands, which we are not willing to take from one another? These are things worthy to be seriously thought of and consider'd by all wilful Absenters from, and Contemners of the Lord's Table.

But the Answer of the Guests here in St. *Luke*, seems to be a little more modest and mannerly; for they do not make so light of the Invitation, as flatly to deny coming, but offer at some Excuses for their not coming and accepting of it: for 'tis said, *They all with one Consent began to make Excuse*; which yet were so slender and frivolous, as in effect to be no better than a downright Refusal, as may be easily seen by considering of them.

The First said, I have bought a Piece of Ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused. A feign'd and frivolous Excuse, and no doubt a false one too; for who is so foolish as to buy a Piece of Ground without seeing it? Do not Men take a strict View and Survey of Land before they

Gospel for the second Sunday after Trinity. 123

they use to purchase it? And may not he be justly reckon'd a Fool that does otherwise? Is it a wise Bargain, for the buying a little piece of Ground for a few Years, to sell an everlasting Inheritance? and for a small spot of Earth, to part with a Kingdom in Heaven? What is a Man profited, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? And if the whole World can be no Recompence or Exchange for the Soul, sure to lose it for a little piece of Ground, an inconsiderable part of it, must be a Bargain infinitely more fatal and foolish: so that this must be acknowledged to be a very slender and trifling Excuse.

A Second said, *I have bought five Yoke of Oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused.* An Excuse no less frivolous than the former; for was there no other time for the trying of his Oxen, than when his Lord's Oxen and Fatlings were kill'd on purpose to entertain him? Is the proving of our Cattle of greater consequence than the approving of our selves to our great God and Master? Ought not the Attractives of his Love, and our Duty, to draw stronger than a Yoke of Oxen? Are Beasts to be minded before and above our Saviour? and is Christ's Yoke of less Consideration than a Yoke of Oxen? Alas! at how low a rate do such Men value the Blood of Christ, who set the Blood of Bulls and Heifers above it? And when God saith, *All the Beasts of the Forest are mine, and so are the Cattle upon a thousand Hills;* is it not absurd to prefer the Care of Oxen before the Owner? so that this too is a very weak and silly Excuse.

A Third said, *I have married a Wife, and therefore I cannot come.* This was a more foolish and frivolous Excuse than all the rest: for (as one hath wittily enough observ'd) he might have brought his Wife along with him, and been the more welcome; and being a Marriage-Feast, to which they were invited, none could have been more proper and welcome Guests than a new-marry'd Couple, who being a little before marry'd to one another, might by this means marry both their Souls to Christ, and thereby live the more happily and comfortably together; it being a much better way of uniting their Affections, to go together to this Feast of Love and Charity in the House of God, than to withdraw from each other into the Places of Discord and Dissension.

These are the vain and frivolous Pretences mention'd in the Gospel for absenting from the Lord's Supper. *St. Mat-
them*

them expresse them by going *one to his Farm, and another to his Merchandize*, things of infinitely less Concern than those to which they are so graciously invited: and therefore we may well think how little such feign'd Excuses will avail before God; as appears by the next words of the Parable: *So that Servant came and shewed his Lord these things.* At which *the Master of the House* is said to be exceeding angry; and well he might, for their Baseness and Ingratitude in rejecting the Tenders of his Mercy and Goodness upon such slight and trifling Pretences: for who that had provided a rich and costly Banquet, and spread his Table with all manner of Varieties, would not be highly offended with such unthankful Guests, as refuse to come and partake of them upon so free and kind an Invitation? Will slight Excuses pass with you upon such Occasions? How then can we think that God will take them at our hands? Why, that himself declares in this Gospel, that none of them that were *bidden shall taste of my Supper*. None can endure to have his Favours despis'd; and therefore God here strikes such wilful Contemners of his Grace out of the List of his Friends, and resolves not to invite them any more, but to give them up to a reprobate Sense, having no feeling of God's Love, nor Relish of Divine Things.

Now this Expositors generally understand of God's utter rejecting of the Jews for their great Perverseness and Infidelity: for tho they were once his peculiar People, dignify'd above all others by many high and noble Privileges; tho the Covenant, the giving of the Law and the Promises, were all theirs, yea, tho the Messias came from them, and was first sent to them; yet because they thrust Salvation from them, and obstinately rejected all the Offers of Mercy and Pardon made to them, God also rejected them, and left them to the Blindness and Perverseness of their own Minds; in which unhappy State they remain to this day. This is represented here by a sumptuous Supper or Entertainment made for them, and many earnest and importunate Invitations made to them; God sending his Prophets and Messengers from time to time to woo and intreat them to come in and accept Salvation from him: but their frequent and frivolous Excuses, and at last their final rejecting of all that could be said or done for them, provok'd God utterly to cast them off, and to call in other Persons of meaner Quality and Circumstances to him.

So we here read, that *the Master of the House being angry, said to his Servant, Go out quickly into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and bring in hither the Poor, and the Maim'd, and the Halt, and the Blind.* This is generally interpreted of the Calling in of the Gentiles, who were before but forlorn Persons and Castaways, excluded from all the Privileges of the Temple, and destitute of all hopes of Favour: *Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise*; as the Apostle describes them. These, upon the Rejection of the Jews, were receiv'd into Mercy, and made Partakers of the manifold Grace of God. So *Paul and Barnabas* told the Jews, *It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judg your selves unworthy of everlasting Life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles: for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a Light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: Acts 13. 46, 47.* Christ himself foretold that the Children of the Kingdom, meaning the Jews, should be cast out, and that the Gentiles should be receiv'd in their room, according to that Promise and Prediction, *Psal. 2. 8. I will give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for thy Possession*; which Promise was here parabolically express'd and fulfil'd in the Master of the Feast's laying aside the Jews, who refus'd the Grace of the Gospel, and commanding his Servant to go into the Streets and Lanes of the City, where the Gentiles were wont to walk forlorn and destitute, and to bring in those who in respect of the Jews were *poor* in Substance, *maim'd* in Body, *halt* in their Feet, and *blind* in their Eyes; that is, labouring under great Infirmities and Distresses both in Body, Mind and Estate. These he order'd to be brought in to this Gospel-Feast, and for accepting of it he heal'd all their Infirmities of Body and Mind; for we read that *the Blind receiv'd their Sight, the Lame walked, the Lepers were cleansed, and the Poor had the Gospel preached unto them. Mat. 11. 5.*

When this was done according to Order, the Servant goes to his Master again, and *said unto him, Lord it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room*: meaning, that the Plenty of the Provision was such, as might well serve a greater Company, and that his Grace was sufficient for all. Whereupon the Lord sends his Servant again, and bids him *go out into the Highways and Hedges, and to*
fetch

fetch in all the Stragglers and Outlyers, *that his House may be filled*: shewing, that his House is free to all Comers, that none are excluded for their Meanness and Poverty, but all are invited, Rich and Poor, Base and Honourable, all may come, and find a true Welcome; for God is *not willing that any should perish, but that all Men should be saved, and come to the knowledg of the Truth*; 1 Tim. 2. 4.

But because some Mens Backwardness may be such as to need a spur, and to require a little awakening, our Saviour here adds with respect to such, *Compel them to come in*. What may be the Import of that Command, what this Compulsion is, and how far it is to be used in such Cases, may be worth our while a little to consider. To which end we may take notice of a twofold Compulsion, the one by Persuasion, the other by Penalties; both which may be useful in many Cases, and in some necessary.

For the first, there is a sort of Violence in the Arts and Methods of Persuasion, and many are drawn to believe and do many things by the mere Force of Reason: this oftentimes overpowers the Mind, and by an invisible and invincible Influence carries it captive to the Obedience of Faith. Words sometimes pierce deeper than the Sword, and gain that point by Persuasion, which no outward Force or Compulsion could obtain. St. Stephen's Adversaries *could not resist the Wisdom and Spirit with which he spake*. St. Peter's Hearers were, by the Sharpness of his Discourse, *prick'd at the heart, and said unto him, What shall we do?* In this sense, to *compel them to come in*, is by the Force of Arguments to draw them unto Christ, and by the Arts of Persuasion to constrain them to come to him.

But where these cannot prevail, (as with the Ignorant and Obstinate they can do little) there they may be driven by Laws and Punishments. Children may be made to learn by the Rod, and the Backwardness of Men may be chastiz'd and quicken'd by good Laws. 'Tis no prejudice to any to be compel'd to their Duty, to restrain their Wandrings, and to keep them in the right way: whereas Multitudes are undone by Liberty and Indulgence. To suppress Schism and Vice by Censures, and the Sanctions of human Laws, hath been ever used in the Christian Church; and 'tis both a safe, proper, and wise Course, to awaken and reclaim Offenders by moderate Penalties: *Compel them to come in* (saith our Saviour) *that my House may be fill'd*. Christ loves to see a full Table, and delights to have his House furnish'd

furnish'd with Guests. But then care must be taken, to fit and prepare our selves for this holy Feast, to have on our Wedding-Garment, that we may be welcome Guests to this Marriage-Supper; for holy things may not be given to Dogs. And what our Saviour here said to the obstinate Jews, he saith to all impenitent Sinners; *None of those Men that were bidden shall taste of my Supper.*

This is the Sum of this Day's Gospel: which may teach us,

1. To magnify and adore the infinite Love and Condescension of Christ, in making such ample Provisions for us, and so graciously inviting his worthless Creatures to them. The Plenty and Costliness of his Provisions, is represented by the *killing of his Oxen and Fatlings*, the best of his Cattel, and the choicest of his Herds and Flocks. The Freedom and Kindness of his Invitation is express'd by his *bidding of many*; indeed, all that by a due Preparation of themselves will come and accept of it: he calls both *Jew and Gentile, Male and Female, Bond and Free*; for they are all one in Christ Jesus. By which he shews himself to be *no Respector of Persons*, but in every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him. This is a Mercy too great to be express'd, indeed too great to be expected, had not God of his undeserv'd Goodness vouchsafed to bestow it; and is therefore to be own'd and accepted with all Thankfulness.

2. From the many Excuses made by the Guests for their not accepting of this Supper, we may learn the natural Backwardness and Averseness of Mankind to their own Good. Tho they were here invited to a highly honourable and beneficial Entertainment, yet every slight Pretence was thought sufficient to keep them from it, and no Intreaty could prevail with them for their own Happiness. Indeed, the Matters alledg'd by them were in themselves lawful and innocent: their buying and seeing a Farm, their providing and proving of Oxen, their espousing and enjoying a Wife, were things in their due time and place very allowable; but the fault was, the preferring these trifling and perishing matters of the World, above the weightier things of Heaven, and the great Affairs of Eternity: their minding a Farm above the Kingdom of Heaven, their taking greater care of Oxen than their own Souls, and their loving Fa-
ther

ther and Mother, Husband and Wife, more than Christ: which they that do, are not worthy of him.

3. From the Master of the Feast's great Displeasure at these things, we may learn the Danger as well as Vanity of all such Excuses: he was so wroth with them, as to threaten that they should not taste of his Supper; they should neither feed at his Table here, nor feast with him hereafter. But 'tis to be fear'd there are some in our days, that abstain from this Feast upon worse Excuses than these: they are loth to come, because they are unwilling to leave their Sins, and amend their Lives, or be oblig'd to such a Strictness as the holy Sacrament requires. But if those more innocent Excuses in the Gospel were not accepted, with what Indignation (think you) will those viler Pretences be rejected? Wherefore, in the last place, let us lay aside all manner of Excuses, and make our selves ready to go to the Lord's Supper; and so by accepting of Grace now, we shall e'er long be advanc'd to Glory.



DISCOURSE XVI.

The EPISTLE for the Third Sunday after
Trinity.

I St. Peter v. 5——12.

All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with Humility; for God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble. Humble your selves therefore under the mighty Hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches God mercifully to hear our Prayers; that we, to whom he hath given a hearty Desire to pray, may by his mighty Aid be defended and comforted in all Dangers and Adversities. Now because Pride and Haughtiness of Spirit is the greatest Obstacle to the Success of our Prayers, and to our Security from Dangers; and nothing conduces more to a
good

good Event and Issue in both, than Humility and Lowliness of Mind : therefore

The Epistle for this Day cautions us against the one, and earnestly exhorts to the other. To which end, it begins,

First, With a general Exhortation to mutual Subjection and Condescension to each other, in these words, *All of you be subject one to another.* There is a more particular Subjection due from Inferiours to Superiours, which consists in honouring their Persons, and obeying their Laws : and this is frequently requir'd in Holy Scripture ; *Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers*, saith St. Paul, Rom. 13. 1. *And put them in mind* (saith he to Titus) *to be subject to Principalities and Powers, and to obey Magistrates ;* Tit. 2. 1. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience sake ;* Rom. 13. 8. with many other places to the same purpose. This Subjection is to be paid only to Princes, and other Magistrates commission'd by them, whom God hath invested with his own Power to rule and govern those committed to their charge.

But there is another and more general kind of Subjection, that concerns all Men, Superiours, Inferiours, and Equals ; who are all requir'd in some sense to be subject one to another : The younger are to submit to the elder, and the elder are to direct, counsel, and assist the younger ; and Men of all Ranks and Stations are to condescend to good Offices, and be helpful one to another : there is none so high, but may and ought to stoop for the good of those beneath him ; and there is none so low, but may be serviceable to those above them. There is that mutual Dependence of each of these upon the other, that neither of them can say, *I have no need of thee ;* for they all stand in continual need of Help and Assistance from one another : and therefore all of them ought to be so far subject, as to be ready to all good Offices for one another. Of this Christ himself hath given us an Example ; for tho he were Lord of all, yet he took upon him the Form of a Servant, and stoop'd so low as to wash his Disciples Feet, merely to teach us to do likewise. There are some, and those many times of very mean Rise and Rank, that affect more Power, and assume to themselves more Honour than belongs to them ; they would fain be seen and thought to be somebody, which makes them oftentimes Busy-bodies in other Mens matters, and Medlers in things which they neither understand, nor appertain to them : as if they had all Wisdom,

and none had Wit enough to do their own business without their Advice. Such as these are so far from being subject, that they would top their Superiours, thinking themselves wiser than their Teachers or Governours; and so take upon them to nose and controul their Betters. To these especially the Apostle gives this Caution, *All of you be subject one to another*: that is, instead of aspiring or usurping Power over others, let each of you esteem others better than your selves, and rather put your selves under, than lift your selves above them. Our Blessed Saviour finding some of his Disciples contending for Preheminence, and striving who amongst them should be greatest, sharply rebuk'd their Vanity; saying, *He that would be greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve*: adding, that he himself was among them, as one that serveth. *Luke 22. 26, 27.* Now,

This Subjection of one to another, is by *St. Peter* here explain'd and express'd by Humility; *All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with Humility.* Where 'twill be requisite to shew, what this Humility is, what it is to be cloth'd with Humility, and likewise what Influence it hath in making Men subject one to another.

For the first, Humility is a Vertue, that consists not in wearing old Clothes, or in any affected Garbs of Austerity or Mortification; for a Beggar may be prouder in his Rags, than a good Christian in finer and more fashionable Attire: but Humility lies in the Heart, and consists in such a low and mean Opinion of our selves, as keeps us from overvaluing of our selves, or undervaluing of others.

There is indeed a Branch of Humility, that respects our Carriage towards God; and that consists in such a deep Sense of our own Vileness, compar'd with the infinite Greatness of God, as makes us to abhor our selves, and adore our Maker.

But the Humility we are here exhorted to, respects our Carriage towards Men, and lies in subduing all those vain and high Thoughts of our selves, as cause us to overlook and neglect our Duty to others: And so 'tis oppos'd to Pride, or such an overweening Conceit of our selves, as is apt to lift Men up, and makes them to despise others, tho many times better than themselves. Whereas Humility consists in having low and mean Thoughts of our selves, and being content that others should have the same of us; not arrogantly assuming Honour to our selves, but in honour preferring one another.

But

Epistle for the third Sunday after Trinity. 131

But what is it to be clothed with Humility? The word in the Original is *ἐνυποβραβεύει*, which signifies the putting on of a Coat or Garment peculiar to Servants, by wearing whereof, as by a Livery, they were distinguish'd from others, and known to whom they belong'd: The Expression gives us to understand, that Humility is the Badg or Cognizance of a good Christian; and to be cloth'd with it, is to wear Christ's Livery, and to be known to be his Disciples: for he himself was *meek and lowly in Heart*, Mat. 11. 28. and would *have the same Mind to be in us, as was in him, to stoop even to the Form of a Servant*; Phil. 2. In token whereof, we are to put on Humility as a Mark of Christ's Followers, and that too not as a loose Garment, that may be put off again, and laid aside at pleasure; but so to be cloth'd with it, as never to change, or be uncloth'd again: for Humility is a Garment, which tho it may look bare or coarse, yet will never wear out, or be out of fashion; for no Garb is so becoming, or renders us more amiable in the sight of God or Man. 'Tis indeed the best of all Garments, for 'twill keep us warm in all Times and Conditions; 'tis not only Clothing, to guard us from Cold and Nakedness, but like a Coat of Mail defends us from all Assaults of our Enemies. In a word,

Humility is a Garment that answers all the Necessities, and secures from all the Dangers of the Soul: 'tis an Ornament in fair Weather, and a Safeguard in foul; for it adorns Prosperity, and succours in Adversity. It enamels other Vertues, and like Charity covers a multitude of Sins. And therefore above all things we should be clothed with Humility; or, as the word signifies, be so girt about with it, as never to part with, or depart from it.

But what Influence hath this Vertue in making Men subject one to another? Why, much every way: for as Pride lifts Men up in their Thoughts above others, and so they come to despise and look down with Contempt upon those they think beneath them, by which it occasions great Disorder and Disturbance in the World; so Humility, on the other hand, makes Men low in their own eyes, by which they become yielding and condescending to another, and so hush up many Quarrels and Contentions. *Solomon* tells us, that 'tis *the proud Heart that stirreth up Strife, and only by Pride cometh Contention*: whereas Humility leads to Peace, and puts Men upon the study of Quiet, by doing their own Business, without meddling or interposing in the Af-

fairs of others. It keeps down the Swelling and Imposthuation of the Mind, whereby Men become troublesome to themselves and others: it will not suffer Men to *think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath given to every one the measure of Faith*: which tends mightily to the Quiet, Safety, and Order of the World. In short, this Grace will render Men true Lovers, Friends, and Servants of Mankind; and instead of being lifted up, will make them subject one to another. Which should teach us to wear this Badge, and above all other Garments to be cloth'd with Humility. And that because, as *St. Peter* adds in the next words,

God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble. The proud Heart resisteth God, and like *Lucifer* sets it self against the Most High: *The Ungodly is so proud* (saith the Psalmist) *that he careth not for God*; yea, that he despiseth him, and saith, *Who is the Lord?* And this makes God the proud Man's profess'd Enemy, he hates and resists him, and how can any bear up against so mighty an Adversary? Well might the Wiseman declare, that *Pride goeth before Destruction, and a haughty Spirit before a Fall*; Prov. 16. 18. And ver. 5. *Every one that is proud in Heart, is an Abomination to the Lord*; and tho hand join in hand, yet shall they not go unpunish'd. An Instance hereof we have in *Pharaoh*, whose Pride God Almighty resisted and chastiz'd with sundry sorts of Judgments. *Nebuchadnezzar* too, for exalting himself above God, was degraded below the Dignity of Men, and was turn'd a grazing among the Beasts of the Field. *Herod*, for assuming to himself the Honour that was due to God only, was eaten up of Worms: and none ever resisted God, but sorely smarted for it. And this may shew us both the Folly and Danger of Pride; for if *they who resist earthly Powers shall receive to themselves Damnation*, what dreadful Punishments must attend them, who proudly resist the Powers of Heaven? But tho God resisteth the Proud, yet

He giveth Grace to the Humble; he sets himself against the one, and always appears for the other. He delights to shew Mercy and Favour to the Humble, and none rise higher in the Opinion of God and Man, than they that are lowest in their own; for God is pleas'd to dwell with the Meek and Lowly, and to take up his abode with the humble and contrite Spirit: and sure they can want no Grace or Favour,

Epistle for the third Sunday after Trinity. 133

Favour, or any good thing, where God himself vouchsafes to reside with his Holy Spirit.

Humble your selves therefore (saith our Apostle) under the mighty Hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Submit your selves unto God, and those he hath set over you; and likewise be subject to one another in all Humility, that ye may escape the Resistance of the mighty Hand of his Power and Justice, and receive the Assistance that will be reach'd out to you by the Hands of his Mercy. Mind not high things, but condescend to Men of low Estate, and then God in his due time will exalt and reward your Humility; for Pride is ever attended with a Fall, and Humility with Rising: this being the first Step that mounts to Honour, 'tis the Root and Foundation of all other Graces, and upon that alone may we safely build our Hopes of Glory.

But because you may meet with some Difficulties and Discouragements in the lower Ground of Humility; for where the Stile is low (we say) every one is apt to go over: therefore the Apostle, in the next words, wills you not to be dismay'd, but to *cast all your Care upon God, who careth for you.* Some indeed may interpret your Humility to be only a Pusillanimity or Baseness of Mind, and miscall a humble Person, by the odious Name of one of a low, mean, and abject Spirit; and so he may be apt to be insulted, abus'd, and affronted by insolent and haughty Men: but St. Peter here directs them not to be anxiously careful or concern'd about such Matters, but to refer all to the Guidance and Goodness of God, who will take a particular care of them, and not suffer any thing to befall them, but what may in the end tend to their Welfare. Christ himself endur'd the Reproaches and Contradiction of Sinners; the Apostles went thro good Report and bad Report, through Honour and Dishonour, and have told us of Scoffers in the latter days, walking after their own Lusts: and therefore we should not be troubled or discourag'd at those things, that have befallen the Son of God, and the best of Men; especially considering, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and live by his Laws.

Furthermore, because the Devil, who fell by Pride, is still tempting and drawing us into the same Condemnation, therefore St. Peter, in the next Verse, advises us to be *sober and vigilant, because our Adversary the Devil, as a roaring*
K 3 *Lion,*

134 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Pride and Ambition is suppos'd to be the first Sin of the Devil and his evil Angels, and the Occasion of their Fall: for not being content with the high Station, wherein God had set them, but affecting to be equal with, or superiour to the most High, they were cast down from the blessed Mansions of Light and Glory, in which they were first seated, into the black Abyss of eternal Darkness: and though they are said to be reserv'd in Chains of Darkness, to the Judgment of the great Day; yet by God's Permission the Devil is here said, to walk about as a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour. That deadly Adversary of ours is daily seeking all Advantages to betray us, he watches what is most apt to affect and blow us up, and then plies us with Temptations suitable to the Vanity. Like a roaring Lion, he seeks first to catch, and then to make us his Prey; for which reason, to arm our selves against him, St. Peter here exhorts us to be sober and vigilant, that we may the better discover and defeat his Designs. Where Sobriety implies,

1st, Moderation in the use of God's Creatures; and so to be sober is to take heed that our Hearts be not overcharg'd with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, by which we lose the Use of our Reason, and the Benefit of God's Protection. Intemperance will easily betray us into the Enemies hands, for it deprives us of all Power of resisting him; nor can we withstand any of his Assaults, when we cannot stand our ground: which should teach us to have the Use of Reason, and the Succours of Religion always ready; all which will be little enough to oppose so subtle and powerful a Foe. Again,

2^{dly}, There is a Sobriety of the Mind, that keeps it from Swelling and Pride; and so to be sober is, not to think too highly of our selves, but to think soberly, according as God hath given the Measure of Faith. There is a Drunkenness of the Mind as well as the Body, both which we are industriously to avoid, and carefully to observe all the Rules of Sobriety, lest Satan get an Advantage upon us, and being lifted up with Pride, we fall into the Snare and Condemnation of the Devil. To prevent which, the Apostle would have us add hereunto the great Duty of Vigilance or Watchfulness, *Be sober, be vigilant*; to watch against the Wiles of the Devil, for he still lies in wait, and seeks all Opportunities to surprize and circumvent us; which should set us always upon our guard, looking every way

way about us, and imploring the Assistance of Divine Grace, to withstand the Evil one, and having done all, to stand. To which end, the Apostle directs us in the next words, to do our part; which is, *To resist him stedfast in the Faith*; and then we may be sure that God will not be wanting on his. *Resist the Devil* (saith St. James) *and he will flee from you*; James 4.7. He will not, cannot stand, if you withstand him; for Christ hath broken his Power, and vanquish'd his Forces; and by the Power of his Grace hath made us more than Conquerors over him: so that if you keep your ground, you are sure to win the Field, his Temptations cannot hurt you without consenting and yielding to him; all your Danger is from your own Cowardise, and you must tamely surrender your selves up to him, before he can do you the least Harm; which is Encouragement enough to resist and defy him: only keep your Courage, and continue stedfast in the Faith, and he must and will flee from you. *Above all things* (saith St. Paul) *take on the Shield of Faith, and that will quench all the fiery Darts of the Wicked*; Eph. 6. 16. A stedfast Belief of the Power and Promises of God, will repel all the Assaults of the Evil one; for *this is the Victory that overcometh both the Devil and the World, even your Faith*.

Neither let any of the Troubles or Trials of the World shake the Constancy of your Mind, or make you fall from your own Stedfastness; *Knowing, that the same Afflictions are accomplish'd in your Brethren that are in the World*: meaning, that they were not the only Sufferers in the World in this way, but they had Partners enough among their own Brethren; there was no Affliction had befallen them, but what was common to others: for their Brethren at Rome, and all other Parts of the World, were Sharers with them in the like Sufferings, and he would not have them think it hard, to taste of that bitter Cup, which others drink off; but to be content to bear a Part in the common Miseries and Calamities of this Life.

To enable them hereunto, our Apostle, in the next words, falls to his Prayers in their behalf, that God would give them Grace and Strength to bear up under whatever might befall them; saying, *The God of all Grace, who hath called us into his eternal Glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffer'd awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*. Where he makes a solemn Address to Almighty God, the Giver of all Grace and Goodness, who hath

reveal'd and call'd us to a State of Salvation by the Sufferings of Christ, after some short Conformity to him in his Sufferings, to lead us on to Perfection; and instead of being shaken by the Troubles of this Life, to be establish'd and confirm'd in the Expectation of future Glory, as the Reward of them. For the Hopes hereof he ascribes unto God all Honour and Praise, concluding with these words; *To him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

This is a brief Account of the Epistle for this Day: the great Lessons we are taught by it, are to shun Pride, and to learn Humility; to which end, we are to meditate this Day upon the Evil of the one, and the Goodness of the other. As for the Evil of Pride, it was the first and great Sin of the Devil, and that which made him truly so; and if we may judg of the Heinousness of the Sin, by the Greatness of the Punishment, we may conclude it to be out of measure sinful, for it cast the evil Angels from Heaven to Hell; that is, from the Top of the highest Happiness, into the Gulph of the deepest Misery: and if God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, let not any proud Person think he shall go unpunish'd. Let none then be puff'd up upon the account of any imaginary Excellence he may have above others, for 'tis only lent to or deposited with him; and *if thou hast received it (saith the Apostle) why boastest thou thy self, as if thou receiv'dst it not?* Do not then feed thy Fancy with any Thoughts of thine own Worth, for that will make thee arrogate more to thy self than belongs to thee; but rather think more upon thy Follies, thy Faults, and thy Frailties, and that will lower thy Spirits, and keep thee from swelling with Pride and Vanity. Moreover, never compare thy self with those that are beneath thee; for that may be apt to raise thy Esteem of thy self, and make thee think more highly of thy self, than thou oughtst to think: But if thou wilt make comparisons, let it always be with those that are above thee, that seeing how thou art excell'd in all natural and moral Excellencies, thou mayst come to think more soberly of thy self, and in Honour prefer one another.

Lastly, Meditate on the Goodness and Gracefulness of Humility; how amiable it appears in the eyes of God and Man, and draws on it the Favour of both. Pride is indeed

Gospel for the third Sunday after Trinity. 137

indeed hateful and odious to all Persons, it leads Men into many a heinous Sin, and brings on many a heavy Punishment: But Humility is the Parent of all Vertue, and tho it may seem to depress, yet it certainly leads to Exaltation; *for he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Let us therefore strip our selves of all Pride and Haughtiness of Mind, which ever goes before a Fall; and let us put on Meekness and Lowliness of Heart, that we may be exalted in due time. To which end, let us watch against the Temptations of the World and the Devil, which are apt to swell us with Pride and Vanity, and earnestly pray to be cloth'd with Humility, and to be found in the number of the poor in Spirit, to whom belongs the Kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XVII.

The G O S P E L for the Third Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Luke xv. 1—11.

Then drew near unto him all the Publicans and Sinners for to hear him: And the Pharisees and Scribes murmur'd, saying, This Man receiveth Sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this Parable to them, &c.

THE great Fame of Christ's Doctrine and Miracles drew Persons of all Sorts and Countries unto him. Among the rest we read here, that *the Publicans and Sinners*, some of the worst of Men, were in that number, and likewise *drew near unto him.* The Publicans were Persons infamous, even to a Proverb, and by their great Oppressions and Exactions upon the People, had render'd themselves vile and odious in the sight of God and Man; and therefore we find them here, and often elsewhere, coupled with Sinners, or Persons of a loose and profligate Conversation. However, these among others came and drew

drew nigh to our Saviour ; but upon what Errand ? Why, that we are here told was *to hear him*. They had heard much of him, and of the great things that he spake and did, and now they had a great Mind and Desire to hear him themselves ; either out of Curiosity, as some think, it being usual to flock after new and much cry'd up Teachers ; or out of Design, as others imagine, to ensnare and entrap him, to seek to get some Advantage upon him, and to find what occasion they could against him ; as some hear, not to learn, but to carp. Others again, and I think with greater probability, conceive that they drew nigh to hear him with better Ends, namely, to learn their Duty from him, and how to direct and amend their Lives. They had seen what Change had been made in *Matthew* their Fellow-Publican, how he had left his Publican's Stall to follow Christ, and become one of his Disciples : They had heard likewise of *Zaccheus* another Publican, how he had restor'd fourfold, and for that reason Christ came to his House, and brought Salvation with him. The Noise of these and many other Matters brought them to Jesus to know the Truth, and to reap the Fruit of his Doctrine. To this end St. *Matthew*, whom our Saviour had lately call'd from the Receipt of Custom to be one of his Followers, made a Feast for him ; to which he also invited many of the Publicans and Sinners, that by hearing his Discourse, they might receive the same Benefit, and become his Disciples. Accordingly our Saviour came and sat down to Meat in his House, and *many Publicans and Sinners came and sat down with him and his Disciples* ; which when the *Pharisees* saw, they began to take exception, asking the Disciples, *Why eateth your Master with Publicans and Sinners ?* This Account St. *Matthew* gives of this Matter, *Mat. 9. 10, 11.* St. *Luke* here to the same effect tells us, that upon the Publicans and Sinners drawing near unto Christ to hear his Discourse, *the Pharisees and Scribes murmur'd, saying, This Man receiveth Sinners, and eateth with them.* The thing they here murmur'd at, was our Saviour's Freedom of Conversation with such bad Men. The Publicans being the Tribute-gatherers for the *Roman* Emperors, were generally Heathens and great Oppressors, with whom it was forbidden by the Jewish Law to eat or converse. The Pharisees therefore and Scribes, who were supercilious Despisers of other Men, took great Offence at our Saviour's eating and conversing with them ; telling his Disciples, that it was no way becoming

Gospel for the third Sunday after Trinity. 139

coming so holy a Person, as their Master pretended to be, to converse so freely and familiarly with the worst of Men; if he were the true Messiah, as they thought, he would decline such evil Company, and keep at a greater distance from Sinners. They expected other things from the Messiah, viz. that he should maintain the Dignity of his Person and Office by a stately Retirement, sequestering himself from common View, that the World might repair to him as a Divine Oracle, and never approach him without the greatest Reverence and Adoration. So that when they saw him so freely walk abroad, and to be so familiar with those who were none of the best, instead of receiving him as a Saviour, they rejected him as an Impostor; styling him *a Glutton, a Winebibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners, a Companion and Favourer of loose and vile Persons.*

Now to remove this Offence, our Saviour lets them know, that the end of his conversing with these Men, was not to encourage or harden them in their evil ways, but to reclaim them from them, and at once to convince and convert them from the Error of their ways: He was so far from approving the Exactions of the Publicans, that he exacted Repentance and Reformation from them, and convers'd with Sinners, not to countenance, but to reprehend and reform their Vice and Wickedness. By which means some of the Publicans, from being Exacters of Tribute, became the Teachers of Righteousness, and many of the Sinners were *turn'd from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God*: which was so far from being inconsistent with the Holiness of the Messiah, that 'twas indeed the main end of his Coming. He told them in *St. Matthew's Gospel*, that *the Whole have no need of the Physician, but they that are sick*; and that he vouchsafed his Company, not where it might be most desir'd, but where it was most needed, for *he came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*: meaning, that his main Business was with those humble and modest Offenders, that were sensible of their Faults, and willing to amend them; these being more likely to be reduc'd to a better Course of Life, than such as are conceited of their own Holiness, and scorn others, as unworthy of their Society and Conversation. Moreover, he bids them go and learn the meaning of that Saying of God Almighty, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*: wherein he prefers the Acts of Mercy and Charity to Mens Souls, before all the ritual Observances of the Law,

Law, and much more before all the nice Formalities of Conversation. For this end it was, that he so freely ate and drank with Publicans and Sinners, and tho he *went up and down* to and with all sorts of Men, yet it was *still doing* good, and healing all kinds of Maladies both of Body and Soul : so that the *Pharisees* might as well blame the Physicians of the Body for visiting Hospitals and sick Patients, as the Physician of the Soul for applying himself to such as labour'd under more spiritual and dangerous Distempers.

Again, he tells them, that *he came to seek and to save all that were lost, that he was sent first to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, to bring them home to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their Souls, and after that to reduce all that were gone astray both of Jews and Gentiles, to gather them all into one Flock, and to bring them into one Fold : which things could not be done, without making himself known to and conversing with them ; for that alone could give him the Opportunity of teaching and instructing Mankind, of instilling his Doctrine into them, and preaching to them the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. This our Saviour here in *St. Luke* explains and exemplifies to us in two or three Parables, *viz.* those of the *lost Sheep, the lost Groat, and the lost Son* ; in all which he insinuates his tender Love and Care of lost Man, and Willingness to save and reduce the greatest Sinners.

The first of these Parables is in the third and following Verses of this Gospel : *And he spake this Parable unto them, saying, What Man of you having an hundred Sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the Wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it ?* Where Sinners are fitly resembled to lost Sheep ; (1.) Because no Creature is so apt to wander as the Sheep, which is so heedless as not to keep right, unless it be still under the Shepherd's Eye ; and this shews how easily we are misled, how often we fall by Temptation, and seldom continue long in the right way. Again, (2.) No Creature is more helpless and liable to danger than a straying Sheep, it hath many Enemies, and no Guard against them ; the Dog, the Wolf, the Fox are all ready to devour and make it their Prey. This represents the forlorn Condition of lost Man, who when out of the care of the good Shepherd, is intangled with the World, ensnar'd by Satan, oppress'd by wicked Men, and is utterly unable to escape or defend himself

himself against his Ghostly Enemies. Once more, a wandering Sheep of all Creatures is the most unlikely of it self ever to return; for being once bewilder'd, it will stray for ever, unless the Shepherd find and restore it: So is it with lost Man, who being out of the way would return no more, except he be reduc'd by the Shepherd, which is by hearing his Voice and following him.

Now who is there (saith the Parable) who having lost a Sheep, doth not bestir himself and go after it, till he find it? How much more then are erring and straying Sinners to be sought after, who would wander for ever in the Ways of Destruction, if not restor'd and directed into the Paths of Life? But to go on with the Parable, when the Owner of the lost Sheep had found it, 'tis said in the next words, *He layeth it on his Shoulders rejoicing*; he feeleth not the Burden, which is much the lighter by removing the Heaviness and Trouble he had in the Loss of it: and *when he cometh home, he calleth together his Friends and Neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found the Sheep that was lost.* He makes merry with them, and doubles his Joys from the Fears he had of losing it, and the Pains he took in finding it. Likewise, *I say unto you (saith our Saviour) Joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just Persons, which need no Repentance:* meaning, that God who is represented here by the Owner of the lost Sheep, and the holy Angels and glorify'd Spirits above, which are meant by his Friends and Neighbours, conceive no small Joy at the Return of a penitent Sinner. As for the Angels, they being the Guardians of God's Children, and ministring Spirits to the Heirs of Salvation, may be well enough suppos'd to be affected with the Welfare and Happiness of each. For we find this heavenly Host singing at our Saviour's coming into the World for the Redemption of Mankind; and ever since desire to contemplate and admire this great Mystery. And every Occasion of this kind may minister to their Gladness, and give a new Accession to their Joy.

But when God is said to rejoice at the Repentance of a Sinner, it must be understood as spoken after the manner of Men: for God is void of all Passions and Perturbations, and above the Transports of Joy and Sorrow. So that when God is said to be angry, to be griev'd, or to be provok'd by Sinners, 'tis meant only of the Effects
of

142 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

of those Passions that he will deal with them, as if he were affected with them as we are in such Cases, though the Passions themselves are not compatible to the Divine Nature: In like manner, when God is said to rejoice at the Repentance of a Sinner, 'tis meant only of its being very agreeable and acceptable to him.

But why is the Joy greater for the finding of one lost Sheep, or the Return of one penitent Sinner, than of all the ninety and nine, that never went astray and needed no Repentance? Why, this is here parabolically express'd, to signify, not that there is more Joy in Heaven for one that was once bad, than for many that had been always good; but 'tis spoken only to enhance the Joy upon the present Occasion: for as the rescuing of one Child from the Pit of Destruction, affects more for the present than the Safety of all the rest, and as the finding of one thing, suppos'd to be lost, rejoices more than the Possession of all the other; so the Return of one lost Person, occasions more present Satisfaction, than many others, though the same should happen to them in the like Circumstance.

This is the first Parable by which our Saviour sought to convince the *Pharisees* of the Reasonableness of his conversing with the Publicans and Sinners, in order to their Repentance and Salvation: for if there be Joy in Heaven at the Conversion of a Sinner, there should be no Murmuring on Earth, at the Means us'd to reclaim them.

The second Parable to the like purpose is in the 8th, and following Verses: *What Woman having ten Pieces of Silver, if she lose one Piece, doth not light a Candle, and sweep the House, and seek diligently till she find it?* Where the lost Sinner is compar'd to a lost Piece of Silver, which being a thing of Value, stamp'd and made current by the Regal Authority, was search'd after with great Diligence; the Candle was lighted to look into every Corner, the House was swept that it might not lie hid or buried in the Dust, and all Means were us'd by a narrow and diligent Search, till she found it. In like manner, the Souls of Men being esteem'd precious, and stamp'd with the Image of God, are to be carefully look'd after, and not suffer'd to be lost or cast away by Negligence or Inadvertency; but being of more Value than the whole World, ought to be preserv'd by the utmost Care and Vigilance, and no Means to be neglected for their Happiness and Salvation.

Gospel for the third Sunday after Trinity. 143

It follows in the Parable, that when the Woman had found her lost Piece of Mony, *she calleth her Friends and Neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the Piece which I had lost.* We are bid in Holy Scripture to *rejoice with them that rejoice*, as well as *weep with them that weep*; that is, to bear a part in the Joys and Sorrows of one another, which will be a means of encreasing the one, and lessening the other. The good Woman here having found what she sought for with great Care and Pains, is transported with a Joy suitable to the Concern she had for its Loss: of this Joy she would have her Neighbours to partake, and therefore calls them together to share with her in it; and from thence we are directed to the Delight and Satisfaction which the Saints and Angels have above at the Repentance of a Sinner: *Likewise I say unto you, There is Joy in the Presence of the Angels of God over one Sinner that repenteth.* By which it appears, that Heaven feels, and is full of this Joy; and when we are pleas'd with any wicked Man's turning from the Evil of his Ways, we join in Consort with the Heavenly Host, and bear a part of the general Joy with the blessed Inhabitants of Heaven, who all rejoice at the Conversion of a Sinner: and if there be so great and general a Satisfaction above in this case, sure we ought not to take any Offence at conversing with them here to that end.

The third and last Parable to this purpose is that of the Prodigal or lost Son; which tho immediately following this, yet being out of the Gospel for this Day, shall be the more lightly touch'd upon. This Son had wickedly left his Father's House, *and spent all his Substance in riotous living*; by which means he was lost to his Father, to himself, and to all the Comforts of Life: but *when he came to himself*, he bewail'd his Misery and Folly, and return'd to his Father, who receiv'd him as one rais'd from the Dead, and welcom'd him with an extraordinary Joy. At which when the elder Son repin'd, for shewing more Joy for a riotous profligate Son than was ever shew'd to him who never offended, the Father mildly reply'd, *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine, it was meet we should make merry and be glad; for this thy Brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found*: signifying, that we may and ought to rejoice at the Return of straying Sinners. By these and the like Parables our Saviour endeavour'd to convince the Scribes and

and *Pharisees* of the Benefit and Charity of his eating with Publicans and Sinners; and that the Freedom of his Conversation with them was rather a matter of Joy, than any just occasion of Offence.

This is the Scope and Design of this Day's Gospel; from which we may learn,

1st, The lost and undone Condition of Mankind in their natural and unregenerate State, whilst they continue in their Sins without Repentance: This is represented in the three Resemblances, of the lost Sheep, the lost Groat, and the lost Son; all which set forth the Desperateness and Desplorable Condition of their Condition. The lost Sheep is never safe or out of danger, till he be restor'd again to the Flock: The lost Groat is of no use or value, till it be found and added to the other Treasure: The lost Son is in a helpless and remediless Condition without returning to his Father. And such are the miserable Circumstances of all straying and wandering Sinners; whilst they are addicted to Vice and Error, they are out of the way to all Happiness, and are going directly in the way to Hell and Destruction. If then they have any Sense or Apprehension of their present Danger, or any Fears, as they well may, of worse hereafter, let this awaken them out of their Security, and seriously consider their sad and desperate Condition. To which end we are here taught,

2^{dly}, To use all possible Means and Industry to get out of this miserable and forlorn Estate; for this reason the Shepherd sought his stragling Sheep thro Desarts and Mountains, and could not rest till he found and brought them back to the Fold. The careful Woman lighted her Candle, swept the House, and ceased not her Search till she found the Piece that was mislaid. The lost Son could have no Ease or Comfort till he went back again to his Father: even so all wandering Sinners, that are gone out of the Way of God's Precepts and Protection, should use all possible means to get in again, and never give themselves any Rest till they have found the Path of Life.

3^{dly}, From the Joy that is in Heaven at the Conversion of Sinners, we may learn what Encouragement we have to the great Duty of Repentance; for hereby we not only promote our own Happiness, but in some measure add to the Joy and Felicity of Heaven, by doing a thing so delightful to God and his Holy Angels. *Fulfil ye my Joy* (saith St.

St. Paul, to the Philippians, in being like-minded; Phil. 2. 2. How much more should we fulfil the Joy of the glorified Spirits above, who are so zealously affected, and so tenderly concern'd for our Happiness and Salvation?

Lastly, From our Saviour's Freedom of Conversation in the World, we may learn Humanity, Courtesy and Affability to Mankind. Nabal, for his Churlishness, was stil'd one of the Sons of Belial; and to bid others stand off, come not nigh, for I am holier than thou, is rather the Language of a proud Pharisee, than the Guise of a good Christian. Our Blessed Saviour shew'd himself marvelously free and conversable with all sorts of Men, in order to their Good; he suffer'd the Publicans and Sinners to draw nigh to him, and to hear him, tho the Scribes and Pharisees blam'd this Familiarity: there was nothing austere or supercilious in him, but in the whole Course of his Life he was obliging and affable to all Men, and would have us learn that Lesson of him, to be meek and lowly in Heart; and that will keep us from despising any, and teach us to condescend to all good Offices to one another; so shall we advance Peace, Goodwill and Happiness here on Earth, and add to the Joys and Hallelujahs of Heaven: Which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.





DISCOURSE XVIII.

The EPISTLE for the Fourth Sunday after
Trinity.

Rom. viii. 18—24.

I reckon that the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us; for the earnest Expectation of the Creature waiteth for the Manifestation of the Sons of God: for the Creature was made subject to Vanity, &c.

THE Collect for this Day teaches us to pray unto God, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, to multiply upon us his Mercy, that he being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass thro things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal.

Now because nothing is so apt to discourage and hinder us from seeking or attaining eternal good things, as the temporal Evils and Sufferings of this present Life; therefore the Epistle for the Day heartens us under them, with the Expectation not only of a speedy Relief, but of an eternal Reward for them: for *if we suffer with Christ* (saith the foregoing Verse) *we shall also be glorify'd together.* And then setting them one against the other; *I reckon* (saith the Apostle) *that the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us.* Where we may observe,

First, That Sufferings may and do befall the best Men here in this Life.

Secondly, That there is a future Glory that will be reveal'd in us to reward them.

Thirdly, That there is no Comparison between the one and the other.

First,

First, I say, That the best Men may and often do meet with Sufferings here in this Life. This is here plainly suppos'd, for the Apostle's reckoning the present Sufferings not fit to be compar'd with our future Glory, manifestly implies, that he reckon'd upon them; and so must we too, while we live here, or else we shall find our selves much out in our Reckoning: for this World is the Scene of Misery and Trouble, and no Vertue or Goodness, how great soever, can exempt us from them; yea, sometimes the greater it is, the more it exposes to Envy and Trouble. *Job*, the richest and best Man in the East, had a large share of them: *David*, a Man after God's own Heart, was more than ordinarily exercis'd with them: yea, the Son of God himself, the great Example of all Holiness and Vertue, could not have this bitter Cup pass from him, and many of his Followers and Disciples have ever since drank deep of the same; which made the Apostle say, *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer Persecution*. The Way to Heaven is not strew'd with Roses, but beset with Thorns, and *we are thro many Tribulations to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. This is the Way that all the Saints and Martyrs have gone before us; they endur'd the Cross before they obtain'd the Crown, and 'twill be in vain for us to hope to arrive at it any other way.

Sufferings then must be reckon'd upon here in this Life; which are sent to us, to keep us humble, to try our Patience and Constancy, to wean us from this World, and to prepare us for a better. And this will lead us,

Secondly, To the next thing suppos'd or taken for granted in these words; to wit, That there is a future Glory reserv'd as a Reward for our present Sufferings: for the Apostle's mentioning here a Glory to be reveal'd in us to crown our present Sufferings, plainly supposeth the Truth of both; and that as we now feel the one, we shall e'er long receive the other. This future Glory is express'd in Scripture, sometimes by a *Kingdom*, sometimes by a *Crown of Righteousness*, sometimes by an *Inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us*: Which Happiness was only guess'd at by the wisest Heathens, who from the Afflictions of good Men, and the Prosperity of bad, concluded that there will be another Life, in which these things will be set right, when Vice shall re-

148 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the
ceive its just Punishment, and Vertue its due Recompence
of Reward.

But what they learn'd only by the faint Conjectures of
natural Reason, we are better assur'd of by the clearer Dis-
coveries of Divine Revelation; *Life and Immortality being
brought to light unto us by the Gospel*: where we read the
Words of eternal Life, and have a full Assurance of a blef-
sed Immortality.

'Twas this that supported the Saints and Martyrs in all
Ages under all their Sufferings; of whom we read, that
they had an eye to this Recompence of Reward. Those
famous Worthies, mention'd in the 11th Chapter to the
Hebrews, did and suffer'd the great things there rehears'd,
by the Strength of their Faith, and the Hopes of Glory:
Yea, our Blessed Saviour himself is said to have *endur'd the
Cross for the Glory that was set before him*; Heb. 12. 2.

In short, Afflictions must be counted upon, and provided
for whilst we are here, being not only expedient, but ne-
cessary for many great and wise Ends; which if they at-
tain, we may comfortably expect a happy and speedy De-
liverance from them, and that they will shortly end in un-
speakable Bliss and Glory: both which things are here plain-
ly suppos'd and taken for granted.

But is this future Glory a sufficient Ballance and Compen-
sation for the present Sufferings we here endure in hopes
of it? Yes, and vastly greater; for so the Apostle, in the

Third place, expressly tells us; *I reckon (saith he) that the
Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compar'd
with the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us*. If they be put
in the Ballance together, the former will be so far out-
weigh'd by the latter, that there is indeed no Comparison
to be made between them. For the same Apostle elsewhere
tells us, that *these light Afflictions, which are but for a mo-
ment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight
of Glory*; 2 Cor. 4. 17. where the Apostle, considering these
things together, observes a vast Difference and Dispropor-
tion between them; and that chiefly in these two things:

1st, In the Weight; they are but light Afflictions, but an
exceeding Weight of Glory.

2dly, In the Duration; the Afflictions are but for a mo-
ment, but 'tis an eternal Weight of Glory. And what
Comparison can there be between the Lightness of a Fea-
ther, and the Weight of a heavy and ponderous Body?
Or

Or who would compare a Moment with Eternity? And yet this and far greater is the Disproportion between the Sufferings of this present time, and the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us. The better to clear this, I say,

1st, The Lightness of Afflictions makes them unworthy to be compar'd to a Weight of Glory. I know 'tis hard to persuade any under Trouble that their Afflictions are light; for *no Chastisement for the present is joyous, but grievous*: All Sufferings are against the grain of Nature, and most Men are apt to complain of the Burden of them; but yet there are many Considerations that may alleviate the Evil, and lighten the Burden of them. As, first, by comparing what we suffer with the much greater Punishments that we deserve, and that will mightily lessen our Sense and Opinion of it: if one that is condemn'd to die comes off with a little whipping, we account the Punishment light and easy; and if we who are sentenc'd to eternal Death, are pardon'd and preserv'd from it by a little Correction, we can have no reason to complain. Again, if we compare our Sufferings with the infinitely greater Sufferings of Christ for our sake, we may easily reckon ours to be but light and gentle Afflictions. Moreover, if we compare the Sufferings of this Life with the unspeakable Torments of the Damned in the next, to which Sin naturally leads; we may reckon them not worthy to be nam'd or mention'd together. But lastly, if we compare the Afflictions of this Life, which upon all these accounts may be justly thought light, with that exceeding excessive Weight of Glory, which they work out for us in the next, we shall find them to vanish into nothing, less than nothing, and Vanity. But,

2^{dly}, Not only the Lightness, but the Shortness of these Afflictions, makes them unworthy to be compar'd with the Glory to be reveal'd in us; for *these Afflictions are but for a moment*, but 'tis an eternal Weight of Glory that follows them. All the Sufferings we meet with here will be soon over; *Sorrow may endure for a Night* (saith the Psalmist) *but Joy cometh in the Morning*. The longest Term of their Duration is for the short space of this Life; and if they end not sooner, Death will surely put a period to them: but this future Glory is everlasting, and knows neither End nor Decay; 'tis a Kingdom that can never be mov'd, and a Crown that shall never be taken from us. And now what Comparison is there between a Minute, and the boundless Duration of Eternity? What Proportion between the light
Dust

Dust of the Ballance, and the heavy Globe of the Earth? or between the small Drop of a Bucket, and the whole Ocean? And yet this and much greater is the Difference and Disproportion between light momentary Afflictions, and an exceeding, excessive, and eternal Weight of Glory: where the Apostle seems to labour how to express as well as bear it; 'tis καὶ ὑπερβολὴ εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βαρὺς δόξης; which implies such a heavy massy Crown of Glory, that 'twill be as much as the Soul will be able to bear or stand under. And therefore the Apostle rightly reckons the Sufferings of this present time not worthy to be nam'd or compar'd with the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us; which is enough to set all good Christians a longing for it, not to value any thing here below, whether prosperous or adverse, but to wait with Patience for the revealing of it. This we should the rather do, because, as the next words tell us, *The earnest Expectation of the Creature waiteth for the Manifestation of the Sons of God.* What this earnest Expectation of the Creature is, what the Manifestation of the Sons of God, and how the Creature is said to wait for it, are Matters of some difficulty to understand, and are therefore variously expounded by Interpreters.

Some understand these things of the Gentile World, who were then expecting what would befall the Jews, whether the Son of God were truly manifested to them, or who among them should be manifested to be the true Sons of God: for *the Creature was made subject to Vanity*; that is, the Heathen World (say they) were held in a State of Ignorance and Idolatry, which is in Scripture often call'd Vanity; and that *not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in Hope*: that is, this their dark and forlorn Condition was none of their own Choice, but 'twas by the Will of God, who suffer'd them to continue awhile in those Idolatries, in hopes of being better instructed and enlighten'd by the Gospel. So the next words intimate; *Because the Creature it self also shall be deliver'd from the Bondage of Corruption into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God*: meaning, as they expound it, that the Heathens themselves should, by the Gospel or Grace of Christ, be rescu'd from the Slavery they were in to Satan and the Bondage of Idolatry, and be inflated in the Rights and Privileges of the Sons and Children of God, and so be made capable of the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us. *For we know (as the Apostle goes on) that the whole Creation groan-*
eth,

Epistle for the fourth Sunday after Trinity. 151

eth, and travaileth in Pain together until now; that is, the whole Gentile World is as it were in Pangs of Travail ever since Christ's Coming, in a manner ready to bring forth Sons and Children of God, being in a good Forwardness to receive the Gospel, which many of the Jews reject. And not only they (saith our Apostle) but our selves also, which have the First-fruits of the Spirit; even we our selves groan within our selves, waiting for the Adoption, to wit, the Redemption of our Bodies: that is, not the Heathens only, but we Christians, who have receiv'd Christ, and enter'd upon the Profession of Faith in him, do earnestly desire and expect this Adoption of Sons, waiting for a Deliverance from the Servitude and Oppression of Servants, and to be translated into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God, and to receive a Redemption from all Evils by the Resurrection of the Body. This is the Sense that some put upon this obscure Passage of Holy Scripture; for which see the Learned Dr. Hammond on the Place.

Others again, and perhaps with greater Reason, interpret this Passage not only of the Heathen World, who may hope to receive this Benefit by Christ's Coming; but of the whole natural World, and all the Creatures in it, who by a natural Instinct may look for some share in the Benefit of it. And the reason of this Expectation may be, because the whole World hath been by Man's first Sin put beside its first and natural Establishment, into which it may perhaps have some innate Desires and Tendencies to be restor'd. For all the Creatures in it are by the first Transgression said to be made subject to Vanity, to be put out of their due Course and Order, and made to administer to the vain Desires and corrupt Designs of Mankind; and that too against their will, and without their knowledg, being over-rul'd by a superior Power, to which they are subject, not without some hopes of being one time or other set right again: which Hopes are grounded upon this, that they having suffer'd part of the Curse for Man's Sin, when he shall be re-establish'd in Grace and Glory, they may in some measure be rescu'd and restor'd too; according to that of *Isaiah*, *Behold I create new Heavens and a new Earth, and the former shall not be remembred, nor come into mind; Isa. 65. 17.* The Psalmist tells us of God's *renewing the Face of the Earth*, which hath been deform'd by Man's Wickedness: And *St. Peter* speaks of *new Heavens, and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness.* Suitably hereunto our Apostle here declares,

clares, that *the Creatures also shall be deliver'd from the Bondage of Corruption into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God.* At present he tells us, that *the whole Creation groans under the Weight and Burden of Man's Transgression, and travails in Pain to be deliver'd of it; of which they may have some secret Hopes or natural Impulses towards it, which is that earnest Expectation of the Creature, that puts them upon waiting for the Manifestation of the Sons of God.* And not only they (saith the Apostle) but we who have the First-fruits of the Spirit, and the Foretastes of a future Happiness, earnestly long for the Completion of it, by the Regeneration of our Soul, and the Redemption of our Body. So that the Force and Sum of the Apostle's Reasoning herein seems to be this: If all inferior Creatures, who secretly feel and groan under the Miseries that Sin hath brought upon them, naturally long for a Deliverance from them; of which, by an invisible Instinct, they have some Hope and Expectation; How much more may we, who have higher Faculties, and fuller Discoveries made to us of these Evils, groan within our selves, and long for a Redemption from them? especially considering that unspeakable Bliss and Glory they will e'er long be attended withal; which is so great, that we may justly reckon the Sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us.

This is briefly the Sense of the Epistle for this Day; which may teach us sundry Lessons: As,

1st, From the Apostle's reckoning upon Sufferings here in this Life, let us learn to do so too; for 'tis certain they will come in one kind or other, either in Body, Goods or Name, and 'tis better to expect and provide against them, than to have them seize us unawares. Let none dream only of happy and halcyon Days, or say with *David*, that his *Mountain is made so strong, that it cannot be moved*; for 'tis but for God to *hide his Face*, and by and by we are troubled. And God will hide his Face, or frown upon such secure and bold Sinners, to shew them their Error, and to punish their Presumption. We were better then to count upon and look for Afflictions, which are as necessary as Physick for the Health and Welfare of our Souls, and serve as Goats to mind and prick us forward in our Duty. Let us, with the Mariners at Sea, prepare for a Storm in the midst

Epistle for the fourth Sunday after Trinity. 153

midst of a Calm, and then we shall weather it the better, and come the sooner into a safe Harbour.

2dly, From the Apostle's reckoning upon a future Glory to be reveal'd in us to crown and reward our Sufferings, let us learn to do the same, and that will enable us to bear them with the greater Courage and Patience, and make us rather rejoice than repine at Tribulations. Indeed, if Matters be well weigh'd, Afflictions are no such heavy and dreadful things as we vainly imagine; for tho they may carry a stern Aspect to Flesh and Blood, yet if we look to the end of them, and consider that eternal Weight of Glory they work out for us, all the Terror of them will vanish, and we shall see greater cause to own the Kindness, than complain of the Hardship of such Sufferings. Let none then *despise the Chastening of the Lord, or faint when he is rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourges every Son whom he receiveth.*

Let us not increase our Burden by Impatience, nor entangle our selves, like a Bird in the Snare, with too much fluttering; but rather commit our selves unto God in Well-doing, and patiently rely upon his Providence, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the Temptation make a way to escape.

3dly, From the vast Disproportion between the Sufferings of this present time, and the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us, we may learn to live above this World, and by the Eye of Faith to look thro the Troubles of this Life, to the Happiness of the next; between which, our Text tells us, there is no Comparison. If the Cross be plac'd in the Highway to a Crown, 'twill be greater Wisdom to take it up, and bear it awhile, than seek to decline it by Ways that lead to greater and everlasting Sufferings.

4thly, From the Creatures being made subject to Vanity, and the whole Creation's groaning under the Weight of Man's first Transgression, we learn the Heinousness and Malignity of Sin, which thus crack'd the Heart-strings of Nature, and brought these Pangs of Sorrow upon the whole Creation; which should teach us to abhor and abandon it, as the Occasion of all the Evil and Mischief that is in the World: it hath brought Disorder and Distress upon all the Creatures, and without Repentance it will yet bring greater upon us; and that which sunk Nature into such Confusion, will, if not amended, sink our Souls into Hell.

Lastly,

Lastly, From the earnest Expectation of the Creature to be deliver'd from the Bondage of Corruption, let us learn to long much more for the Adoption of Sons, and to be inflated into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God. In a word, let the present Sufferings of this Life take off our Hearts from all things here below, and set us a waiting and preparing for that incomparable and transcendent Glory, that shall be reveal'd in us hereafter: To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, thro the Merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XIX.

The GOSPEL for the Fourth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Luke vi. 36——43.

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful: judg not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day is taken out of our Blessed Saviour's Divine Sermon on the Mount, as 'tis deliver'd by St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*. The Part or Portion of it selected for this Day's Meditation, contains the great Duty or Vertue of Mercifulness, which is here recommended to us in all its Branches: it begins thus; *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.* The word *therefore* shews it to be an Inference from the foregoing Verse; wherein our Saviour bids us to love our Enemies, to do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your Reward shall be great; and ye shall be the Children of the Highest, for he is kind to the Unthankful, and to the Evil: And from thence infers, *Be ye therefore merciful, &c.* Where we have a Precept and a Pattern; the Precept is to be merciful, the Pattern is, as your Father also is merciful. St. *Matthew* expresses it by being perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, Mat. 5. 48. to signify

Gospel for the fourth Sunday after Trinity. 155

signify that Mercifulness is the Perfection of all Vertues, call'd therefore by the Apostle, *The Bond of Perfectness*; and likewise that 'tis the highest Perfection of a good Christian, making *the Man of God perfect, and thorowly furnished to every good Word and Work*. Now this Mercifulness consists both in giving and forgiving; the former relates to the Wants and Necessities, the latter to the Trespasses and Failings of one another; giving to the one, and forgiving of the other: both which are to be briefly consider'd.

The *First* Branch of Mercifulness consists in giving, and that relates to the Wants and Necessities both of Body and Soul. As for the Wants of the Body, that stands in need of Food, Physick and Rayment; and therefore the Acts of Mercifulness here are to feed the Hungry, to give Drink to the Thirsty, to clothe the Naked, to visit the Sick, to redeem Captives, to entertain Strangers, and the like. These are recited by our Saviour, in his Account of the Proceedings of the last Day; and the good *Samaritan* is commended for taking care of the distress'd Traveller, by pouring in of Wine and Oil into his Wounds, and making other Provision for him, with a Charge to all Men to go and do likewise. As for the Wants of the Soul, that stands in need of Counsel, Comfort, Admonition and Encouragement; and therefore the Acts of Mercifulness here are to instruct the Ignorant, to counsel and settle doubting Persons, to admonish Sinners, to comfort the Afflicted, to support the Weak, to correct the Obstinate, to preserve Men from Sin, and the Temptations leading thereunto, and the like: All which are requir'd and expected of us, according to the several Places and Stations wherein God hath set us.

Moreover, there are Acts of Mercifulness that relate to Mens Goods and good Names: Those that respect Mens Goods, are to preserve them as far as we may from Rapine and Robbery, to relieve the Oppress'd, to undo heavy Burdens, to see the Needy and Necessitous have Right, and to promote as much as we can by our Interest and good Word the Prosperity of all Men. To this the Apostle directs, *Gal. 6. 10. As we have Opportunity, let us do good to all Men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith*. Again, there are Acts of Mercy and Charity to Mens good Names, as to discountenance evil Reports, to vindicate honest Mens Reputation from Slander, Detraction and Defamation, and to give every one the just Praises of his Worth and good Works.

These

These Acts of Mercifulness are to be extended to all Men, high or low, Friends and Foes; for our Saviour commands us to *love our Enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us*: for so the Pattern here added to the Precept obliges to, for we are bid to be merciful, *as our Father also is merciful*; that is, to follow his Example, who is *kind to the Unthankful, and to the Evil*: He maketh the Sun to shine upon the Good and Bad, and the Rain to descend on the Just and Unjust; he scatters his Blessings promiscuously upon all Persons, and thereby teaches us to make no Distinction in the common Offices of Humanity and Charity. *Solomon* tells us, that *a good Man is merciful to his Beast*; he will not overlade or overwork him: but as the Providence of God takes care for Oxen, so will he provide Necessaries for all Creatures that serve him, and are under his Care. But much more is our Compassion to be shew'd to the bodily Wants, and the Necessities of Mens Souls, who are made after the Image of God, and are of the same Kind and Nature with our selves, whose Needs are to be supply'd out of the Abundance of those Talents which God hath entrusted us withal. Moreover, a good Man will be tender of the Credit and Reputation of others, and will be merciful in his Censures and Judgment of other Men; so we are directed in the next words, *Judg not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned*: Which words condemn not the publick Office of a Judg, nor forbid the condemning of Criminals upon a fair Hearing in Courts of Judicature; for these act in God's Name, and by his Authority, and what they do herein is absolutely necessary for the Publick Peace, Order and Safety of the Commonwealth: And so are indeed Acts of Mercy highly conducing to the Publick Welfare, by countenancing Vertue, and suppressing Wrong. But the judging here condemn'd, is private Persons rash judging and censuring one another without any Authority; and passing Sentence upon the Actions of others, without any Examination of the Matter, to which they have no Right or Call. This is a Practice too common in the World, most Peoples Discourse in their impertinent Visits consisting of Tales and Stories of their Neighbours, whereby they play away their Reputation, and please themselves in one another's Follies and Weaknesses. Neither is this Practice less mischievous and malicious, thus to destroy the Credit of others by rash Judgment and Censures; it hinders the
Good

Gospel for the fourth Sunday after Trinity. 157

Good and Welfare of Neighbours, undermines the Peace and Comfort of Society, begets Hatred, Discord and Contention, increases Law-suits, promotes Revenge, and does unspeakable Mischief; beside, it usurps the Authority of God, and invades his Tribunal: And therefore the Apostle asks the Censurer, *Who made thee a Judg? and who art thou that judgest another? To his own Master he standeth or falleth:* and having no such Power committed to thee, *Why dost thou judg thy Brother? God hath appointed a Day wherein he will judg the World in Righteousness;* and therefore lay aside thy weak and partial Judgment, and *judg nothing before the time:* for thee to meddle herein, is to take too much upon thee, and to forestal the Day of Judgment. But if the Sinfulness and Injustice hereof will not discourage Men from it, let the Danger of it deter them from this evil Practice. Our Saviour's Caution in *St. Matthew* is, *Judg not, that ye be not judged;* implying, that they shall have Judgment without Mercy, who shew no Mercy: Men will repay their Censures upon them, and will judg as harshly of them as they do of others; but God will repay them much more, and pass the severest Sentence upon them for taking the Right of Judicature out of his hands, and judging of his Servants. But our Saviour here in *St. Luke* encourages Men to forbear this Practice from Motives of Mercy, which will be shew'd to them that shew it to others; *Judg not (saith he) and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.* Men are not so forward to speak or judg hardly of those that are wont to speak and judg favourably of others; nor will they condemn or pass Sentence upon such as put the best Construction on others Actions, and give to every one their due Commendation. The good Effects of their Mercy and Charity are commonly return'd into their Bosom: *Give therefore (saith our Saviour) good Words, and good Works to others, and it shall be given to you;* and that in good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, *shall Men give into your Bosom:* which referring to all sorts of Commodities, dry and liquid, signifies the plentiful Returns that will be made for all the Acts of Mercy and Loving-kindness; *for with the same Measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measur'd to you again.* They that trade in evil Reports and hard Censures, will be surely paid home in their own Coin; and they that deal in good Words and kind Actions, shall have the Kindness of both abundantly repaid by God and Man: in which
both

both Scripture and Experience may fully confirm us. This is the first Branch of Mercifulness, which consists in giving, and directs us to shew mercy to the Bodies, the Souls, the Goods, and good Names of all Men.

The *Second* Branch of this Vertue consists in Forgiving, to which we are here likewise call'd and encourag'd in these words, *Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.* Where by *forgiving* we are to understand the passing by of Injuries, especially Censures, Contumelies, and all sorts of Indignities; which we are to be so far from revenging, as not to suffer them to cool or lessen our Charity towards them that do them, but rather to heap the Acts of Mercy and Charity upon the heads of such Enemies, as well as Friends. To this we are frequently exhorted: *Dearly Beloved, avenge not your selves, but rather return Good for Evil; so that if thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him Drink; for thereby thou shalt heap Coals of Fire upon his head, not to consume, but to melt him into Love and Kindness.* And if we thus forgive others, we shall be forgiven our selves. Men are commonly willing to pardon the Faults and Failings of those, who are willing to pardon others; but God will be much more so, for he hath made our forgiving of others the Condition of his forgiving of our Offences; and if we perform our part, we may be sure God will not fail of his. And therefore,

If the World should be so wicked and short-sighted, as to reproach any for his Kindness, and return him nothing but Evil for his Good-will; yet let him not be dismay'd: our Saviour met with such Usage from the World, and was rewarded for it with a Crown of Glory; and so shall we too, if we persevere to the end in Well-doing. This he illustrates here by a Parable, saying, *Can the Blind lead the Blind? Shall they not both fall into the Ditch?* If we follow the blind Guidance of the World, must we not be led into great Errors and Dangers? Can it be thought that *the Disciple should be above his Master?* And if he met with the Censures and Contradiction of Sinners against himself, may we hope wholly to escape them? Is it not sufficient for the Servant to be treated as his Lord? Yea, *Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master:* and if he was made perfect by Sufferings, shall we grudge to arrive at it the same way?

After

Gospel for the fourth Sunday after Trinity. 159

After this, our Saviour turns his Discourse again to the rigid Censurers, by another Parable; saying in the next words, *And why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but perceivest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?* Where by the *Mote in the Brother's Eye* is meant some lesser Failing or Infirmary, such as some Indecency of Behaviour, some Inadvertence or Indiscretion; which having no great Guilt or Malignity in it, is compar'd to the small Dimensions of a Mote, which if gotten into the Eye, may a little disturb the Sight, but not darken or put it out. By the *Beam in their own Eye*, we are to understand some greater Crime or Enormity; which having the bigger Dimensions of a Beam, totally hinder the Sight, and keep the Eye from discerning matters aright. So that the Sense of this Rebuke is, *Why dost thou so easily see and censure small Faults in others, when thou hast much greater of thine own; which thy Pride makes thee overlook, and thy Partiality will not suffer thee to discover?* Now from hence we learn two very obvious, but sad Truths:

1st, The Proneness of Mankind to espy and aggravate small Faults in other Men. There is scarce a Mote in a Brother's Eye, which an evil Eye will not discover; yea, and magnify too into a Beam: the Censurer is eagle-ey'd to discern another's Failings, and can make a Mole-hill to become a Mountain. Do not too many put the worst Construction upon some Mens Words and Actions, omitting all the Circumstances that may extenuate and excuse them, and insisting only on those that may enhance and increase the Guilt? And this proceeds (as was before hinted) sometimes from Pride, which prompts Men to asperse and blacken others, that themselves may shine the brighter: Sometimes from Envy, which cannot bear the Lustre of another's Merits, and therefore must raise some Dust of Detraction to obscure and darken it: Sometimes from Malice, which works its mischievous Ends upon those it hates, by blasting their Reputation: Sometimes again this proceeds from Differences in Religion; it being usual with Sectaries and Separatists to raise and spread evil Reports of others, to countenance their own Separation. In short, there is a certain Pride and Pleasure that some Men take in finding faults, partly to shew their great Sagacity and Integrity above others, and partly to gain some Power and Superiority over them, that they may appear greater by a shew of being better than they. And there is that Ill-nature
and

and Ill-will reigning in many, that never speaks well, but makes them ever ready to shoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words.

2dly, We may observe here, as the Proneness of Men to espy Faults in others, so their great Backwardness to see their own greater Miscarriages. One would think that a Beam should be more easily seen than a Mote; and indeed so it would, if there were not something else to interpose and hinder: but such is the Prejudice and Partiality of most Men, that they can sooner see a Mote in their Brother's Eye, than a Beam in their own. They that, like *Argus*, are all Eyes to behold the least Slip or Infirmary of their Neighbours, are yet stark blind with relation to themselves, and cannot see a much greater Enormity of their own: and this is owing to Self-love and Self-interest. Men are so fond of themselves, that they cannot see any thing amiss in them, and like *Lais* would break their Looking-glass, if it shew'd the Spots and Wrinkles of their Face. Others again are so addicted to their Interest, as to hide all that may hinder it; and because Vice and Wickedness, Fraud and Falshood, are great Enemies to Prosperity and Preferment, they must by all means be conceal'd in themselves, and disclos'd in others. This *Horace* perceiv'd long since in his time, *Cum tua pervideas, &c.* and half an Eye may plainly discern it in ours.

3dly, Our Saviour observes here Mens Forwardness not only to see, but to reform and amend Faults in others, without any regard to their own. This is held forth in the next Question; *Either how canst thou say to thy Brother, Brother, let me pull out the Mote that is in thine Eye, when thou thy self beholdest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?* Where he rebukes the Forwardness of their Zeal, who would pull out a Mote, or amend a small Failing in another, and in the mean time overlook a Beam, and neglect more heinous Enormities in themselves. We know some who talk much of Reformation of Manners, and call loudly for the punishing of Vice and Immorality, when at the same time they can indulge themselves in the more pernicious Evils of Schism, Dissension, and all manner of Disobedience.

These our Saviour, in the next Verse, calls by the name of *Hypocrites*, and directs to another and better Course for the reforming of Manners; saying, *Thou Hypocrite, cast out first the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see*

clearly

Gospel for the fourth Sunday after Trinity. 161

clearly to pull out the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye. Where he first brands such Reformers with the name of Hypocrites, for affecting a feign'd Shew of greater Piety and Religion than other Men, and seeking to appear to the World better than they really are. Next, he lays before them the true and right Rule of Reformation, which is to begin with our selves, and to amend what is amiss there. True Reformation, like Charity, begins at home, and makes Men more solicitous to reform their own Ways, than to pry into and censure the Manners of others. Such *Censores Morum* had need have not only sufficient Authority, but an exemplary and unspotted Integrity; lest their own Miscarriages upbraid the Forwardness of their Zeal, and confute their goodliest Pretences. To act aright then, we must first pull out the Beam that is in our own Eye; for while that is there, it will so cloud and intercept the Sight, that we shall not see matters aright either in our selves or others. But when that is remov'd, then shall we see the more clearly to pull out the Mote that is in our Brother's Eye. We shall be able with better Judgment and greater Authority to reprove and reform others, when our own Miscarriages are laid aside, and cannot be objected against us.

This is the Sum of this Day's Gospel: it remains that we observe and practise the great Lessons contain'd in it. As,

1. To be ever mindful of the great Duty of Mercifulness; and that in both the Branches of Giving and Forgiving: by the one giving to the Wants and Necessities of others, by the other forgiving the Injuries and Trespases done to our selves; and in both imitating the Goodness and Bounty of our heavenly Father, who denies not the Blessings of the Sun and the Rain to the Evil and Unthankful, and passes by the Offences of them that daily provoke him. Let us not then confine the good Offices of Mercy and Kindness to them only, from whom we have or hope to receive the like again; for this is rather Bartering than Bounty, and is not so much Mercy as Merchandize: but let us extend them to those that are unable or unwilling to return them; yea, to such as repay us only with Ingratitude and Unkindness: so shall we become *the Children of the most High*, and be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. And this we should the rather do, because the Proceedings

of the last and great Day of Judgment will turn much upon this point of shewing mercy. They that have reliev'd Christ in his Members, shall be pronounc'd blessed, and enter into their Master's Joy; they that have neglected or refus'd these Acts of Mercy, shall be denounc'd cursed, and doom'd to utter and eternal Darkness.

2. From this Discourse we may learn to be merciful in our Censures, not judging and condemning one another, but interpreting mens Words in the best Sense, and putting the best Construction upon all their Actions. This Charity and the Commands of God require of all Christians, whereas all uncharitable and censorious Judging is directly opposite and contrary to both. 'Tis a piece of Injustice done to God, by taking his work out of his hand, and invading of his Prerogative: *Every one of us* (saith the Apostle) *shall give an account of himself to God, and therefore let us not judg one another any more*; Rom. 14. 12, 13. *Speak not evil one of another* (saith St. James) *he that speaketh evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law*; he sets himself above the Rule that he is to walk by, and so is no longer a Doer of the Law, but a Judg: which is a high Presumption, for *there is one Lawgiver and Judg, who is able to save and to destroy*; and *who art thou that judgest*? Jam. 4. 11, 12. Moreover, this judging another is a great piece of Injustice done to our Brother, by usurping a Power over him, that no way belongs to us; 'tis judging another Man's Servant without any leave or authority from his Master; 'tis an Encroachment upon the Liberty of Christians in things indifferent, for *why is my Liberty judged* (saith the Apostle) *of another Man's Conscience*? for which no Man hath any Commission: 1 Cor. 10. 29. Again, this judging is a great Injury to the Censurer himself; for his Censures commonly recoil upon himself, and the Darts he aims at others Reputation, oft-times wound his own; he frequently makes a Rod for his own back, none being more shot at and censur'd, than they who so liberally let fly these Bolts: for *with what Judgment ye judg* (saith our Saviour) *ye shall be judged*; and *with what measure ye mete, it shall be measur'd to you again*. Mat. 7. 1, 2.

Lastly, From the Rule of Reformation here set by our Saviour, let us first begin with reforming and amending our selves, and remove Beams from our own Eyes, before we meddle with Motes in our Brother's. Let us converse
more

Epistle for the fifth Sunday after Trinity. 163

more at home, and sweep our own doors, before we look abroad and complain of the Foulness of others. In a word, let us abstain from all rash and hard Censures of others, and let us judg and condemn our selves; and then we shall not be judg'd or condemn'd of the Lord: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XX.

The EPISTLE for the Fifth Sunday after
Trinity.

1 Pet. iii. 8——15.

Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another: Love as Brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendring Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing, but contrariwise Blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a Blessing, &c.

WE are taught in the Collect for this Day to beseech Almighty God, that the Course of this World may be so peaceably order'd by his Governance, that the Church may joyfully serve him in all godly Quietness. To effect or bring this to pass,

The Epistle for this Day prescribes this excellent Advice to that end, *Be ye all of one mind*: signifying to us, that Unity of Mind and Judgment is the best means to preserve the Peace of the Church and all godly Quietness; and likewise that Diversity of Opinions is the main cause of all the Discord and Confusion that happens in it. And therefore St. Paul, in his last Advice to the *Corinthians*, joins them both together; saying, *Finally, Brethren, be of one mind, live in peace*, 2 Cor. 13. 11. thereby intimating, that there is a Connexion or mutual Dependence of these two upon each other, that Unity will put an end to Divisions, and the best way to live in peace, is to be of one mind.

But what is that Unity or Oneness of Mind here prescribed to that end? Why that respects partly Matters of Religion, or the great Affairs of the Church; and partly Matters of Practice, or the Rules of a good Life.

First, I say, we are to be all of one mind in the weighty Matters of Religion, *viz.* in the Doctrine, Discipline, and Communion of the Church; in all which we are commanded to think and *speak the same things, and to be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind and the same Judgment.* 1 Cor. I. 10.

As for the Doctrine of the Church, that is contain'd and deliver'd to us in the Holy Scriptures, the Standard of all Divine Truths; and is more briefly summ'd up for us in the Apostles Creed, the Touchstone of sound Doctrine, or *Form of sound Words*, which we are call'd upon to *hold fast*. This is that *one Faith*, in which all Christians are to agree or unite, *Eph.* 4. 3, 4. 'tis that Faith of the Gospel, in which they are to stand fast in one Spirit, and with one Mind to strive for; *Philip.* 1. 27.

As for the Discipline of the Church, that likewise was instituted by Christ for the Unity and Edification of all its Members. There is but *one Lord* (saith the Apostle) that is, Christ himself, the sole Head and Governour of his Church; who gave *first Apostles, secondarily Pastors, and then Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ:* *Eph.* 4. 11, 12. Where *first* signifies a Primacy of Order and Jurisdiction; for the Apostles were appointed to preside over the rest, to ordain Elders in every City, and to set in order the things that were wanting: *Tit.* 1. 5. And as they died away, others of the inferiour Order succeeded, and were advanc'd to their Office, as *Matthias* was in the room of *Judas*. Herein our Saviour continu'd the antient Government of the Jewish Church, which was in the *High-Priests, Priests, and Levites*: he only chang'd the Names, ordaining first *Apostles*, and under them *Pastors and Teachers*; which holy Discipline is still handed down and continu'd to us in a Succession of *Bishops, Priests, and Deacons*: which God long preserve. This is the Discipline of the Church, in which we are all to be of one mind, without swerving from it, or setting up new Models in opposition to it. Then,

Lastly,

Epistle for the fifth Sunday after Trinity. 165

Lastly, For the Worship and Communion of the Church, that is *the Bond of Peace*, mention'd by the Apostle, that helps to make it *one Body*, by tying all the Members together, and uniting them in one Christian Fellowship; for *we being many* (saith the same Apostle) *are one Bread, and one Body*, by joining together in one Communion: by this we serve God, as we should, with one Heart and one Consent, and with one Mind and one Mouth glorify our great Creator.

These are the great and weighty Matters of Religion, in which we are requir'd to be all of one mind; for being all prescrib'd by Divine Authority, and so made necessary and essential to the Being and Continuance of the Christian Church, we are all to agree and unite in them, and not to differ or divide about them.

But, *Secondly*, the Oneness of Mind here directed to, relates not only to the great Affairs of Religion and the Church, but likewise to Matters of Practice and the Rules of a holy Life; as will appear by the following part of this Day's Epistle: where we are bid to be of one mind,

1st, In all Acts of Compassion and Courtesy to one another. So the next words direct; *Having compassion one of another, love as Brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.* The Sense whereof is, that we should agree together in all the mutual Offices of Love and Kindness; sympathizing with our Brethren in their Afflictions, and bearing one another's Burdens, thereby easing and comforting each other as much as possible; having a Fellow-feeling of their Afflictions, which will encourage them to bear up, and not sink under the Weight of any Trouble that may happen to them: imitating the good *Samaritan*, who pour'd in Wine and Oil into the Wounds of the distress'd Traveller, which our Saviour there styles a friendly and neighbourly Act, willing us to go and do likewise. This is to *have compassion one of another*, and to *love as Brethren*. To which we are to add all Acts of Courtesy and Kindness, relating to a prosperous as well as adverse Condition; sharing in the one, and sympathizing in the other. This is to *be kindly affection'd one to another, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep*; being affected with the Good or Evil that happens to any, and partaking in the Joys and Sorrows of one another: and in this we are bid to be all of one mind. And as a Consequent of this, the Apostle wills us to be of one mind,

2dly, In avoiding all manner of Revenge and Retaliation ; saying in the next Verse, *Not rendring Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing, but contrariwise Blessing ; knowing that ye are thereunto call'd, that ye should inherit a Blessing.* The meaning whereof is, that we should never permit our selves in any degree to act or meditate Revenge in case of any Injury done to us : which how great soever it may be, we must not think of returning the same or the like again. If the Injury done be by Acts of Violence, to do the like again, is the Revenge of the Hand ; if it be by railing Words and Accusations, to return Railing for Railing is the Revenge of the Tongue : both which are carefully to be avoided by all the Followers of Christ, who hath given us both his Precepts and Example to that purpose ; for he hath commanded us to love our Enemies, and to do good to them that hate us, himself doing the same to his greatest Adversaries. So that instead of recompensing Evil for Evil, we are to return Good for Evil, and Blessing for Cursing ; for hereunto we are call'd by the Precepts and Profession of Christianity. This mind the Apostle would have us all to be of ; and by thus doing good and blessing of others, we shall receive a Blessing from God, not only in the Life that now is, but in that which is to come.

And here the Apostle speaking against Railing and the Revenge of the Tongue, adds a seasonable Caution against it, back'd with a strong Motive or Reason to enforce it, in the next words : *For he that will love Life, and see good days, let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile.* Which words are quoted out of the 34th Psalm, 12th and following Verses ; where the Psalmist gives the same Advice, and urges it upon the same Considerations. There is none but desires to live long, and to see many and happy Days ; 'tis the Voice of Nature, *Who will shew us any Good,* and promote the Comfort and Prosperity of our Lives ? Why, here is a piece of wholesom Counsel given to that end, to wit, to keep the Tongue from Evil-speaking, Lying, and Slandering, and the Lips from uttering any Deceit or Guile : both which will prevent many Troubles that are apt to shorten and embitter our Lives. *The Tongue,* when let loose, is by St. James stiled *a Fire, a World of Iniquity, that setteth on fire the Course of Nature, and is set on fire of Hell ;* James 3. 6. meaning, that 'tis frequently a means of kindling Divisions, Strife and Contention, and is the cause of infinite Evils and

Epistle for the fifth Sunday after Trinity. 167

Confusions in the whole Course of Man's Life; it sets Kingdoms, Families, and Societies in a combustion, and for that purpose it is set on work by the Devil, and inflam'd by a Fire that comes from Hell.

Now he that would live a quiet and happy Life, must watch and restrain this unruly Member, keeping it to the good Behaviour, and confining it to the Rules of Truth and Decency. *David* resolv'd to *keep his Mouth as it were with a Bridle, whilst the Ungodly was in his sight*; to prevent its Extravagance, and to avoid the Evil and Mischief that too often proceeds from it. He that useth his Tongue to Falshood and Deceit, stirreth up much Strife, and occasions sometimes very fatal and bloody Contentions, to the shortning many times of Mens Lives, and the ruin of their Relations; for bloody and deceitful Persons shall not live out half their days. But he that useth and keepeth his Tongue to Truth and Honesty, will prevent many a Brawl, and preserve the Lives, the Peace and Quietness of Mankind. In short then, to escape the Dangers, and obtain the Blessings of this Life, we must keep our Tongue from all atheistical and blasphemous Speeches against God, from all evil and reviling Speeches against our Prince, and from all detracting, lying, and backbiting Speeches against our Neighbour; and so guide our Words with Discretion, that they may administer Good to our selves, and Grace to the Hearers. Herein likewise *St. Peter* would have all Christians to be like-minded, agreeing together in *eschewing Evil and doing Good*; by all means *seeking Peace*, and if it seem to flee from them, to follow and *pursue it*.

Now to preserve this Oneness of Mind, or mutual Agreement in these things, the Apostle in the next Verse presses it by a double Argument; the one taken from the Safety of so doing, the other from the Danger of the contrary. The first is in these words, *For the Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open to their Prayers*: that is, there is a watchful Providence over the humble and peaceable Christians, that will promote their Good, and preserve them from Evil; the Eyes of the Lord are still looking about for their Security, his Ears are always open to hear their Prayers, and his Hands are ever ready to supply their Wants and Necessities. So that there can be nothing wanting, that may tend to their present or future Happiness. Whereas secondly,

The next words tells us, that *the Face of the Lord is against them that do Evil*. He is so far from countenancing the Wicked and Contentious, that he sets his face against them, and is no Friend, but a profess'd Enemy to them. To *lift up the Light of the Countenance*, is in Scripture-Phrase a token of Favour or Kindness; but to *set the Face against* any, is to bid defiance to him, first to frown, and then to fight him. Accordingly, God's setting his Face here against such Evil-doers, is either to humble them for their good, or to bring greater Evils upon them, to punish their Pride and Presumption.

But farther to comfort and encourage the Obedient, he asks the Question in the following Verse, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye are Followers of that which is good?* Being guarded by the Protection of Divine Providence, and the Integrity of your own Actions, few or none will incline or venture to do you any mischief. But if any should be so wicked as to molest and trouble you for adhering to the ways of Unity and Vertue, be not discourag'd at such Sufferings; *For if ye suffer for Righteousness sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their Terror, neither be troubled.* Be not dismay'd or disturb'd at these things, but rejoice in such Tribulations, for great is your Reward in Heaven. Rather count them as Blessings, than sink under them as Burdens; for if you bear up manfully a while, they will tend to the Increase of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter. *Only sanctify the Lord God in your Hearts;* be thankful to him for all his Dispensations, set him up in your Hearts as your Lord God, and make him your Fear and your Dread; and then he will be both your Patron and your Portion for ever.

This is in short the Substance of the Epistle for this Day; the whole Design whereof is to persuade us to be all of one mind in the Principles and Practices of true Religion, to unite in the Worship and Service of God, and to join together in the Practice of all Christian Vertues, tending to our own Good, and the Welfare of one another.

But here some may be apt to tell us, that 'tis not possible for all Men to be of one mind in these matters, and that such an Unity never was or can be in the Christian Church.

In answer to this, the Example of the primitive Christians, of whom we read that they were of *one heart and one mind*, and that *they continu'd stedfast in the Apostles Doctrine*

trine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer; is a plain Confutation of this Objection: for this shews such a Unity to be both possible and practicable, and that there was a time when this Union was found, and Dissensions unknown among Christians. Which Example is recorded for our Direction and Encouragement, to let us know, that if we will do as they did, we may be as they were. Beside,

The frequent and earnest Exhortations to this Unity in Holy Scripture, plainly shew it to be attainable by all that will use the means, and have a mind to it; for the Holy Ghost never calls or puts any upon impossible or impracticable Tasks.

Moreover, the many sharp and severe Checks given by the Apostles to the Authors and Abettors of Divisions, farther shew this Unity to be both possible and necessary: for as they would not advise to any thing that was impossible, so neither would they blame any for what was unavoidable.

But there are others who tell us, that if such an Unity were possible, yet it is not necessary, no more than 'tis for all Men to be of the same Stature and Complexion; and that different Opinions and Practices may as well be allow'd in the Church, as different Trades and Callings are in the World. In answer to this, I say,

1st, For all Men to be of the same Stature and Complexion, is neither in their power, nor is it under any command, and so can be in no wise necessary; whereas to be all of one mind is frequently commanded in God's Word, and so must be a necessary Duty. And,

2^{dly}, Tho there may be many particular Callings and Professions in the World, to employ Mens different Gifts and Abilities for the publick Good; yet there is but one general Calling as Christians, in which they are all to agree and go hand in hand together. So the Apostle tells us, *we are all called into one Calling*, and have all but *one Hope of this Calling*, even the Salvation of our Souls; which we are therefore all to aim at, without varying from, or dividing in it.

Thus we see wherein we are all to be of one mind; namely, in all the Acts and Duties of Religion, that we owe to God and to one another; together with the Weakness of those Exceptions that are commonly brought against it.

It remains then, that we be all Followers of this Unanimity, and jointly agree in all the Parts and Duties of it; going to the House of God together as Friends, and to each other's Houses as Neighbours, abounding in all Acts of Piety and Devotion to the one, and of Justice, Kindness, and Compassion to the other. This is to *dwell together in Unity*, which the Psalmist makes the goodliest and pleasantest of all Prospects, *Psal. 133. 1.* 'Tis to live the Life of Saints here, and of Angels hereafter; yea, 'tis to *do the Will of God on Earth, as 'tis done in Heaven*: for there is a perfect Harmony, Consent and Unity among the blessed Spirits above, who all join in one Consort, and with united Hearts and Minds do the Will, and sing the Praises of their Maker; and to fit us for those heavenly Mansions, we must labour for the same Concord and Unanimity here. Discord and Dissensions are the Dispositions of Hell, and lead to those infernal Regions; 'tis Love, Peace, and Unity, that must prepare us for the Habitations above, and qualify us for the Happiness and blessed Society of Heaven.

But how may we come to be thus of one mind in serving of God and one another? Why, that must be done,

1. By removing all the Obstacles of this godly Love and Unity; such as turbulent and unruly Passions, which are apt to discompose and divide mens Minds; Pride, and a vain Conceit of our own Wisdom, which makes Men refractory to their Superiours, and peremptory in their own ways; inordinate Self-Love and worldly Interest, which draw too strongly from the ways of Truth and Peace, and lead into all manner of Errors and Divisions: which occasion'd St. Paul's Advice, that *all Bitterness, Wrath, Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away, with all Malice*; Eph. 4. 31. And St. Peter's to the same purpose, to *lay aside all Guile, and Hypocrisy, and Envy, and Evil-speaking*; 1 Pet. 2. 1. These are the main Hindrances of Unity, and are therefore to be carefully watch'd against and avoided by all that would promote or pray for it.

2. That we may be all of one mind in these desirable Matters, we must labour for those gracious Qualities and Dispositions, that can alone fit us for it; such as Meekness, Humility, Submission to Superiours, and the like: which excellent Graces and Vertues will mightily conduce to this Union of Heart and Mind, and 'tis the lack of them that creates all the Discord and Dissension that is among us.

Epistle for the fifth Sunday after Trinity. 171

If you observe it, you shall find most Men commending Peace, and speaking up for Unity: but the mischief is, they must all have it in their own way, tho ever so different and contrary one to the other; they are willing enough that all Men should be of one mind, but then every Man must be of theirs, or else they cannot agree with them. 'Tis this puts all the difficulty into this Duty, and renders it in a great measure unpracticable.

Now there is but one Expedient to cure this Evil, and that is, for Men to think modestly and soberly of themselves, to allow their Teachers and Governours to know more, and to be wiser than they; and so to submit their private Judgment to the publick Wisdom. By thus hearkning and yielding to those whom God hath appointed to teach and direct us, we may soon come to be of one mind, but without it never. Which made the Apostle exhort all Christians, *not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath given to every one the Measure of Faith*; Rom. 12. 3. In a word then, let me bespeak you in the words of the same Apostle; *If there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels of Mercies, fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one accord, and of one mind*: Phil. 2. 1, 2. So shall we become one Flock and one Fold, under one great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls: which God grant, &c.



D I S.



DISCOURSE XXI.

The G O S P E L for the Fifth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Luke v. 1—12.

It came to pass, that as the People press'd upon him to hear the Word of God, he stood by the Lake of Gennefareth, and saw two Ships standing by the Lake; but the Fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their Nets: And he entered into one of the Ships, which was Simon's, &c.

THE People, mov'd by the Divine Discourses and miraculous Cures of our blessed Saviour, flock'd in great Multitudes to him from all Parts: and being a Teacher come from Heaven to shew the Way thither, they press'd hard through Crouds and Throngs to hear him; as he that comes with glad Tidings shall be sure to have many Followers.

Some of those that thus press'd upon him, had been the Disciples of the Scribes and Pharisees, who having (as they were inform'd) corrupted and falsify'd the Law, they desir'd to hear the pure Word of God out of Christ's Mouth, and therefore strove hard to come near him to that end.

The Place where he stood, when they came to him, was by the Lake of Gennefareth; call'd sometimes the Sea of Galilee, *Mat. 4. 18.* sometimes the Lake or Sea of Tiberias, *Mat. 14. 34.* and here the Lake of Gennefareth. At our Saviour's standing there, He saw two Ships standing by the Lake; but the Fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their Nets. These two Ships or Boats belong'd, the one to Andrew and Peter, the other to James and John, the Sons of Zebedee: And these were the Fishermen here mention'd. But there seems to be some small difference

Gospel for the fifth Sunday after Trinity. 173

rence between the Evangelists, *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke*, in the relating of this Story of Christ's coming to these two Ships or Boats: *St. Matthew* tells us, that *Peter* and *Andrew* were casting their Nets into the Sea or Lake, as if they were actually fishing; *Mat.* 4. 18. and that *James* and *John* were in their Boats mending their Nets; ver. 21. *St. Luke* here speaks indifferently of them, that they left their Boats, and were washing or scouring their Nets, as if they had left off fishing for that time; though they might meet together again a little after about the same Business, and so both may very well be thought to consist together. Again, *St. Matthew* speaks of calling *Peter* and *Andrew*, who straightway left their Nets and follow'd him; *Mat.* 4. 20. and that he went his way, and seeing *James* and *John*, the two Sons of *Zebedee*, he call'd them sometime after: But *St. Luke* takes no notice of two different Calls, but mentions them as done together. Now these small Differences may be easily suppos'd between the one that speaks briefly and concisely of the Matter, and the other that speaks more largely of the Manner and Circumstances of the whole Action. But to proceed to what is more material,

'Tis said in the next Verse, that *Christ* enter'd into one of the Ships, which was *Simon's*, and pray'd him that he would thrust out a little from the Land: And he sat down, and taught the People out of the Ship. The Multitude following our Saviour to the Shore, he consider'd how he might instruct them in the best manner, that the Place where they they were would admit of: and to that end he went into *St. Peter's* Ship, which was then ready to receive him; and having plac'd the People to the best advantage of hearing him, he discours'd before them of things that were of the greatest Use and Benefit to them.

What the particular Matter or Subject of this Discourse was, is not here set down, but no doubt related to the Affairs of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the great Concerns of their Souls; and perhaps was the Heads of his Divine Sermon on the Mount, which he preach'd to them soon after. By this we learn the great Willingness of our Saviour to teach and to do good to all Mankind, for he embrac'd all Opportunities of imparting to them his Father's Mind, and improving them in all Divine and Heavenly Wisdom; and thereby hath given us an example of counselling,

counselling, comforting, and instructing one another, and to the best of our Knowledge and Power helping forward the Salvation of all Men.

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, launch out into the Deep, and let down your Nets for a Draught. When he had ended his Discourse, he put Peter upon the Business of his Calling; and being a Fisherman, he bids him put forth into the Sea, and cast out their Nets for a draught of Fishes: whereby he shew'd his Approbation of Mens Diligence and Industry in their several Stations and Callings, willing them carefully and seasonably to follow the Business of them, that they may receive a Blessing from their honest and innocent Endeavours.

But Simon *answering, said unto him, Master, we have toil'd all the Night, and have taken nothing.* His bad Success had mightily discourag'd him, and made him backward to the using of any farther Endeavours. Most Men are unwilling to labour in vain, or to follow Business, when they see nothing comes of it; but this is many times thro their own Folly and Default, they have not things so soon and in that measure and quantity that they expect, and so cease their Endeavours after them.

Some lay aside their Prayers, because they do not find a present Answer to them; and others neglect and refuse to labour, because they do not instantly reap the desir'd Fruits of it: whereas by a little Patience and Perseverance in their Duty, they may obtain more than they could reasonably expect; *For we shall reap (saith the Apostle) if we faint not.* And so it prov'd in this Case: St. Peter felt something of this Impatience and Distrust, and by the fruitless Labour and Toil of one Night, was almost discourag'd from any farther Attempt, till awaken'd by our Saviour's Call, he renews his Endeavours, and falls to his Work again; *Nevertheless (saith he) at thy Word, I will let down the Net.* Christ's Word quicken'd both his Diligence and his Hopes; and that made him readily obey it, by letting down his Net, which he had wash'd and prepar'd for a better Opportunity. But what was the Effect of this chearful Compliance? Why, that the next Verse tells us; *When they had thus done, they enclos'd a great Multitude of Fishes, so that their Net brake.* We shall lose nothing by obeying and trusting our Lord; yea, we shall be infinite Gainers by both. For the Disciples here who had toil'd all Night, and caught nothing, no not so much as
one

one single Fish ; by believing and doing as Christ commanded them, took up such vast Numbers of Fishes as brake their Net, tho before wash'd and mended for the Draught: A seasonable Encouragement to all Christ's Servants to go on chearfully in the Duties of their respective Callings ; not to despond after some unsuccessful Toils and Trials ; nor to desist from the Works of their Vocation for any seeming Discouragements or Disappointments they may meet with in it.

But what did the Disciples do upon this extraordinary Draught of Fishes, and the breaking of their Nets? Why, *They beckon'd to their Partners, which were in the other Ship, that they should come and help them ; and they came and filled both the Ships, so that they began to sink.* They were more oppress'd now with the Number and Weight of the Fish taken, than they were before with the want of them ; and therefore call'd to their Companions for Assistance, under the Burden of their Abundance. They beckon'd to the Partners in the other Ship to come and help them, not in their Poverty, but their Plenty, to share in their Prosperity, and to ease them of some of the Care and Trouble of it. To which they readily came, as most Men are willing to repair to and partake of Plenty ; the Rich have many Friends, and they that have Store of Provisions, shall never want Company to receive and consume them. When they, in the other Ship, came to these Disciples, they found them labouring under the Burden of Affluence and Plenty, which was so great, that they could not well bear nor manage ; for they found the number of the Fish taken at one Draught sufficient to fill both the Ships, and the Weight of them great enough to sink both the Vessels. Prosperity is sometimes more dangerous than Adversity, and more are overwhelm'd with Plenty, than are sunk with Poverty. A Heathen could observe, that few Men can *καταπέπσαι μέγαν ὄλθον*, digest great Prosperity ; it exposes to Difficulties and Dangers, that are not easily conquer'd ; and more Men perish by Luxury, than pine away by lack. The Disciples here were in greater Danger by the Fulness, than they were by the Emptiness of their Vessels ; they who before swam about with Pleasure, were here sinking with Pressure, and call'd for Assistance, not so much in time of Need, as in time of Abundance. Now here we may remark two or three things, that may be worth Observation :

(1.) That

176 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

(1.) That our Saviour suited his Miracles and wonderful Works to the Employments and Necessities of those, with whom he had to do; as being more likely to work upon them, than such as had no Reference to either. Christ having here to do with Fishermen, whom he was about to convert, and call to be his Disciples, he thought he could not do better with them, than to take them in their own way, and by a miraculous Draught of Fishes, especially at a time when they could take none themselves, to convince them of his Divine Power: By this they perceiv'd him to be Lord of the Sea, as well as Land, and that he had all the Creatures in both at his Call and Command, and could bring them together at all times and places, both when and where he pleases. By this astonishing Draught of Fishes, he caught the Disciples too, and enclos'd them in the same Net: a Draught it was, far above and beside their Expectation, and such a one as they knew nothing but the commanding Power of God was able to bring to pass; and this gave them such a convincing Evidence of his Messiahship, that they ever after devoted themselves to his Service, as we shall see after. Again,

At another time, we read that *Peter* seeing our Saviour walking on the Sea, as on dry Ground, and that too in a great Storm, entreated that he might come to him on the Water. Christ calling him to him, he went out of the Ship, and walked on the Sea to meet his Master, who to try his Faith, permitted him to sink a little under Water; which made him in a passionate Fright to cry out, *Lord save me*: whereupon Christ took him by the Hand, and set him again on the Top of the Water, with this mild Rebuke, *O thou of little Faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* At which *Peter* and all that saw it were astonish'd at the Miracle, and brake out into this Confession; *Of a truth thou art the Son of God*; Mat. 14. 32, 33.

Thus having to do with Seamen and Fishermen, he treated them with Arguments taken from their own Calling and Element, and convinc'd them of the Divinity of his Person by Miracles done in and upon the Sea: For they were all amaz'd, when they saw the Winds and the Sea obey him, and that he commanded not only the Fowls of the Air, but the Fish of the Sea, and whatsoever passeth through the Paths of the Sea.

And as he accommodated his Miracles sometimes to Mens Callings, so did he at other times to Mens Necessi-
ties;

ties, which are apt likewise to make deep Impressions upon them. So when great Multitudes that followed our Saviour in the Wilderness, were in great want, and almost famish'd with Hunger, he multiply'd five Loaves and two little Fishes to the feeding of five thousand Men, beside Women and Children; and when they were all filled, there was more left than was at first set before them. Which Miracle so astonish'd them, that they all cry'd out, *Of a truth this is that Prophet, that was to come into the World.* This is the first Remark on this Miracle. The

(2d) Is, from St. Peter's and the other Disciples complaining of their bad Success, we may observe the Prone-ness of Mankind to murmur and distrust God upon very slight Occasions: we find here that when Jesus bid *Simon* to launch out into the Deep, and to cast out their Net into the Sea, he reply'd that he had done that already, but in vain, and had been fishing all the Night to no purpose; and if they could not succeed then in the Night, the most proper time for that Employment, there can be but little Hope of speeding better now, it being probably high Noon: as if Christ would put them upon Labour in vain, and could not give Success to the Work which he sets them about. Many are apt to distrust and complain without a Cause, the *Israelites* were still murmuring and complaining, though they were daily fed with Manna and Quails in the Wilderness: and too many still, upon every little Appearance of bad Weather, are apt to despond and murmur, as if they were to be starv'd and undone; which is a great Distrust of God Almighty's Providence, and highly provoking to him.

(3.) We may observe hence, that tho good Men may be liable to these Despondencies, yet by a little Consideration they soon deliver themselves from them. We find here that St. Peter was almost discourag'd by the bad Success of one whole Night's Labour, yet nevertheless at Christ's word, he let down the Net; and his Obedience was well rewarded, for the Net immediately enclos'd so great a Multitude of Fishes, that it began to break, insomuch that they were forc'd to call to their Partners, that were in a Ship hard by, to come in to their Assistance; and both the Ships were so deeply laden, that they could hardly keep them from sinking: An Example great enough to keep us from sinking under any Disappointments in the

way of our ordinary Callings, and to encourage us to go on in them according to God's Word; and by waiting God's time, we shall find a Blessing ample enough to reward all our Industry.

But to go on to the Effect of this Miracle: How did *Peter* behave himself upon the sight of this miraculous Draught of Fishes? Why, the next words tell us, that *when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus Feet, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful Man, O Lord!* He was so surpriz'd at the Sight, that, reflecting on his former Distrust and Backwardness, he thought himself unworthy of his Presence; and so, with a profound Humility and Dread, desir'd him to depart from him: *for he was astonished* (say the following words) *and all that were with him, at the Draught of the Fishes that they had taken:* meaning, that what he said before of his departing from him, proceeded not from a Desire of being rid of his Company, but from a Sense of his own Sinfulness, that made him unworthy of it, and a certain Dread and Amazement, which the Sight of the Miracle and his Presence had wrought in him. The Glory of his Person, and the Greatness of his Power had so dazled and confounded him, that he was not able to bear it, and therefore threw himself down at his Feet, and pray'd him to go from him.

In the same degree of Astonishment were also *James and John, the Sons of Zebedee, who were Partners with Simon;* being all struck with the same Admiration and Amazement at the Lustre of his Person and Actions.

But to remove *St. Peter's* Fears, and to deliver him from his Astonishment, *Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch Men:* Be not frightened or dismayed, for I have higher and better Work for thee, more happy and honourable Employment to set thee about; for thou shalt no longer busy thy self in catching silly Fish, but thou shalt catch Men, and bring great Shoals of Converts and Profelytes into thy Net: and these too shall be caught, not as the Fish are, to their Destruction, but they shall be taken and kept alive, and nourish'd to eternal Salvation. From henceforth he dealt no more with those mute and silly Animals, but convers'd with Men, bringing them in to the Obedience of the Gospel, and catching their Souls to eternal Life. And this miraculous Draught of Fishes, which he saw done before him, was but an Emblem or Presage of a richer and more plentiful Prey, that he should have in ta-

aking of Men; which accordingly came to pass soon after: for at one Sermon he caught no less *than three thousand Souls*, who all *gladly received his Word, and were baptized*; as we read *Acts 2. 41.* Neither were these words spoken to *Peter* only, but to the other Disciples, to whom our Saviour likewise promis'd to make them Fishers of Men; *Mat. 4. 18.* And these also drew in many Converts, and *daily added to the Church such as should be saved.* And being thus encourag'd by our Saviour's Call and Command, *when they had brought their Ships to Land, they forsook all, and followed him.* The common Form of Speech, us'd in our Saviour's calling his Disciples, was *Follow me*, as may be seen in sundry Places of the Gospel; and their Compliance with it is usually express'd by their *leaving all, and following him.* So it was here, Christ had no sooner spoke the Word, but they readily obey'd, by forsaking all, and following him; for as soon as they came to Land, they dispos'd of their Concerns and Goods into the hands of Friends (as all prudent Men are wont to do) and immediately *forsook all*: that is, they left their Trade, with all the Business of it, and all farther Expectations of Benefit by it, and cast themselves upon Christ's Care and Disposal of them. And well enough they might: for he who with a word's speaking could draw up such vast Quantities of Fish at one Draught, could provide better for them than they could for themselves; and he that could feed five thousand Persons with a few Loaves, and two little Fishes, was able to take care of them, and would not suffer them to want. But however that were, they cast off all worldly Cares, and devoted themselves to his Service by *following him.*

But what is here meant by their following of Christ? Why, three Things are manifestly intended by it.

- 1st, The following of his Person, by attending upon him.
- 2^{dly}, The following of his Doctrine, by learning of him.

And,
3^{dly}, The following of his Example, by imitating of him.

For the

- 1st, The Disciples were the constant Followers and Attendants upon his Person; for they went up and down with him wherever he went, they were the Eye-witnesses of his Miracles, and the Ear-witnesses of his Discourses: and tho he sometimes withdrew from them into Places of Solitude and Retirement upon some extraordinary Occasions, yet, for the most part, they were daily Companions

with him, and the constant Spectators both of his Glories and Troubles; as we may read at large in all the four Evangelists. This way of following Christ was peculiar to the Apostles and first Disciples, who had the Honour of living, seeing and conversing with him during his Abode upon Earth; which was a Privilege not to be enjoy'd by any since his Ascension into Heaven. But there are two Ways of following Christ still attainable by us; in both which Senses we are stil'd his Followers. As,

2dly, By following his Doctrine, and learning of him: This Privilege the Apostles had by receiving the Word from Christ's own Mouth; but we have it at second hand, by receiving it from them who have handed it down to us. However, the Doctrine is the same in both, and we are as well taught by him now, as they were then. He that teaches another, and instils his Instructions into him, is said to be his Master; and they that are taught by him, and embrace his Tenets, are stil'd his Followers. Now we are bid as much to *learn of him* as his first Disciples; and his Apostles inculcate upon us the same Lessons as he did upon them; to wit, that *the same Mind should be in us, as was in Christ Jesus*: So that as he was equally a Teacher to them and us, so are we equally his Disciples and Followers well as they; and so we may all well be, for he was a *Teacher come from God*, and was alone able to deliver *the Words of eternal Life*. He hath given us the best Instructions and Assistances too that were ever communicated to the World, and hath deliver'd the most sublime and heavenly Truths that we are capable of receiving; by learning whereof we cannot miss the Way to eternal Life: and so by embracing of them we are truly and properly said to be his Followers.

3dly, To be a Follower of Christ, is to follow his Example, and to act by the Pattern that he hath set us: He that treads in the same Steps after another, is said to follow him; and he that takes Christ for his Director and Guide, and walks even as he walked, may be justly reckon'd in the number of his Followers. Now Christ hath given us the best Example for our Imitation; he hath gone every step of our way to Heaven before us, to the intent (saith the Apostle) *that we should follow his Steps, who did no Sin, neither was any Guile found in his Mouth*. He hath set before us the most excellent Pattern of Love, Meekness, Humility and Patience, and indeed of all other Vertues;

Gospel for the fifth Sunday after Trinity. 181

tues; in which we are bid to be *Followers of him as dear Children*: And when we are arriv'd to that, we may be said with the Disciples in the Text, to *forsake all, and follow him*.

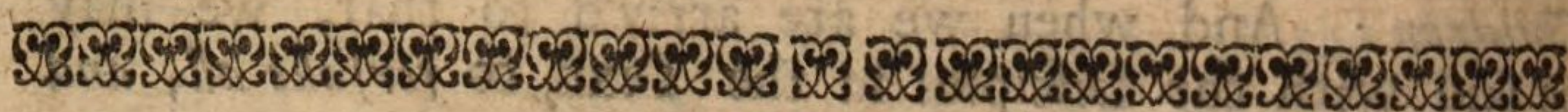
This is the whole Drift and Design of this Day's Gospel; which having improv'd all along as I have gone in it, there can be no need of any farther Application. Briefly then let us learn from hence,

1st, To confirm our Faith and Hope in our Blessed Saviour, and in all times of Difficulty and Disappointment stedfastly to believe and stick to him.

2^{dly}, From this Instance of his miraculous Power and Goodness, learn to go on diligently and chearfully in the Duties of your several Callings, and in the Use of all lawful Means firmly trust and rely upon his Providence for the Issue and good Success of them.

3^{dly}, Let us from hence learn to be constant and faithful Followers of Christ, both in his Doctrine and Example; so shall we, who now follow him in Grace and Holiness here, hereafter follow him to Glory: Which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, &c.





DISCOURSE XXII.

The EPISTLE for the Sixth Sunday after
Trinity.

Rom. vi. 3—12.

Know ye not, that so many of us, as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death; that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in Newness of Life, &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of the good things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him, which are indeed such as pass Man's Understanding; and from thence teaches us to pray to him to pour into our Hearts such Love towards him, that we loving him above all things, may obtain his Promises, which exceed all that we can desire, thro Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now because these good things are obtain'd for us by the Death of Christ, and the Promises of them depend much upon his Resurrection; therefore the Epistle for the Day mentions our Conformity to both, as the best Means to procure a Title to them, and to secure an Interest in them: which things are represented to us in our Baptism, and the Profession made in it obliges us to them.

As for our Conformity to the Death of Christ, the Apostle asks the Question in the beginning, *Know ye not, that so many of us, as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his Death?* meaning, that 'twas a thing well known among Christians, that the Immersion in Baptism refer'd to the Death of Christ: the putting the Person baptiz'd into the Water, represented and proclaim'd his Death; and the plunging him over head and ears in the Water, according to the Custom of those Countries, signify'd their being bury'd with Christ. Therefore (saith the Apostle in the next Verse)

Verse) *we are buried with him by Baptism into Death*: Our being dip'd in Water in the Font being a Sacred Figure of his being dip'd in Blood, and laid up in the Grave; which in the next Verse is stil'd, our being planted together in the Likeness of his Death, that like as Christ was swallow'd up of Death, and bury'd in the Earth, so we are overwhelm'd in Baptism, and bury'd in the Water.

This is briefly our Conformity to Christ's Death, as 'tis represented in Baptism; the End whereof is to mortify and kill Sin in us: and therefore antiently they who were baptiz'd were wont to put off their Garments, as a Sign or Token of their putting off the whole Body of Sin, and being dead to it; as we shall see after.

As for our Conformity to Christ's Resurrection, that likewise is here set forth as represented in Baptism: for as the being cover'd all over in Water, according to the antient Ceremony, signify'd the being dead and bury'd with Christ; so the rising up again out of the Water, signify'd their rising again with Christ: *that like as he was rais'd from the Dead by the Glory of his Father, even so we also should walk in Newness of Life*; and as we are planted in the Likeness of his Death, so are we in the Likeness of his Resurrection: the dipping of the Body under the Water, and the rising of it again out of the Water in Baptism, being lively Symbols and Figures of both.

But what were the Ends or design'd Effects of this Likeness or Conformity to Christ's Death and Resurrection? Why, that the following Part of this Epistle will inform us. And,

First, The End of our Conformity to Christ's Death was (as I hinted before) the killing of Sin in us, and the forsaking of it in the whole Course of our Conversation: so the next words speak of it as a thing well known and taken for granted; *Knowing this* (saith the Apostle) *that our old Man is crucified with him, that the Body of Sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve Sin*. Where, by the *old Man*, we are to understand that Corruption of Nature, which we deriv'd from our first Parents, whereby all the Faculties of the Soul, and the Members of the Body became the Instruments and Servants of Sin. This Depravedness of Nature is in Scripture often call'd the *old Man*, which is corrupt according to the sinful Lusts. Now the End of Christ's Death was to crucify this *old Man*; and our conforming to it, is to have it crucify'd with him: so

St. Paul declares of himself, *I am crucify'd with Christ*, Gal. 2. 20. Because the World is apt to draw us into the Love and Service of the old Man, he tells us, that the World was crucify'd unto him, and he unto the World; Gal. 6. 14. withal minding us, that *they that are Christ's have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*; Gal. 5. 24. And all this, *that the Body of Sin may be destroy'd in us*. St. Paul complain'd of this Body of Sin as the greatest Burden he groan'd under, and of which he most desir'd to be eas'd, saying, *O wretched Man that I am! who shall deliver me from this Body of Sin and Death?* Rom. 7. 24. Now Christ by his Death hath deliver'd us from this Body of Death; and our being baptiz'd into his Death at once represents and entitles us to that Deliverance, by which we are so far made free, *that henceforth we should not serve Sin*: which Freedom hath deliver'd us both from the Power and the Guilt of Sin.

As for the Power of Sin, that is destroy'd for us by the Power of Divine Grace; insomuch that *Sin shall no longer reign in our mortal Bodies, that we should obey it in the Lusts thereof*. Sin indeed domineers and rules in the Hearts of the Children of Disobedience; it hath set up its Empire or Kingdom within them, and so made them Slaves and Vassals to their vile Affections; but this Kingdom is pull'd down and destroy'd by the Influence of the Divine Spirit: so that now if we manfully withstand it, it can have no Dominion over us, and without our own yielding and consent it cannot prevail against us; its Power is broken, and the Grace of God is sufficient to fortify us against its strongest Temptations: which made St. Paul say, *that he could do all things thro Christ that strengthened him*.

And as the Power of Sin is destroy'd, so is the Guilt of it remov'd by the Death of Christ: the Sting of it is pluckt out, and it can now do us no more harm than a dead Lion or a painted Serpent; the Cry of it is silenc'd by the Blood of Christ, and its Obligation to Punishment wholly taken off by his pardoning Grace: for *there is now no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit*. Rom. 8. 1.

These things are all confirm'd to us in the next words; *For he that is dead is freed from Sin*. As a Man that is dead is free from the Dominion of any, that before had power over him, so he that is dead to Sin, is deliver'd from the Dominion and Power of it: all human Slavery ends with Death;

Epistle for the sixth Sunday after Trinity. 185

Death; for then, as *Job* speaks, *the Servant is free from his Master*, *Job* 3. 19. So all spiritual Slavery and Thralldom to our ghostly Enemies is ended with this spiritual Death: He that is dead and buried with Christ by Baptism, is no more to lead or continue in any sinful Course, than a dead Man can live again his former Life. So *St. Peter* tells us, that as *Christ suffer'd in the Flesh for Sin*, so we that suffer and are dead with him are to cease from Sin, that we should no longer live the rest of our time in the Flesh, to the Lusts of Men, but to the Will of God; *1 Pet.* 4. 1, 2. By all which it manifestly appears, that as the Design of Christ's Death was to destroy Sin, so the End of our being baptiz'd into his Death, is to kill Sin in us, to take away the Power and Dominion of it, that it may no longer reign in our Bodies, or bring Damnation to the Soul. This is briefly our Conformity to Christ's Death, by dying unto Sin, for which he died, and burying our Iniquities in the same Grave in which he was laid.

Secondly, As for our Conformity to Christ's Resurrection, and the End of that, both those consist in living unto God, and in walking before him in Newness of Life. The proving and clearing of this is indeed the main Design of the Epistle for this Day: for as the Belief of Christ's Death, into which we are baptiz'd, implies our being dead unto Sin, for which he died; so the Belief of his Resurrection, which is likewise declar'd and profess'd in Baptism, implies our living unto Righteousness, of which his rising again from the Dead was both a Sign and Seal. So the words already discours'd of, and those that follow, manifestly import. *The Newness of Life* before mention'd, *ver.* 4. implies such a new regenerate Life, answerable to Christ's Resurrection, as consists in a Course of Sanctity and religious Walking with God. *The being planted in the Likeness of his Resurrection*, mention'd *ver.* 5. signifies our Obligation to imitate and answer that in the Fruits of a new and holy Life, of which his Resurrection was a lively Image or Resemblance: for as the Corruption of our Nature, that we receiv'd from *Adam*, is call'd *the old Man*, which we are requir'd to put off; so the Regeneration of it, that we have by Christ, is call'd *the new Creature*, which we are commanded to put on. *As in Adam all die*, both a natural and spiritual Death, *so in Christ shall all be made alive*, by a Life of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter. This is the Apostle's Reasoning

186 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

Reasoning in the next words, *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him*; that is, if we truly and sincerely perform our part in imitating of Christ's Death, by dying unto Sin, and transcribe his Resurrection by rising to a new and holy Life, we shall together with him have a joyful Resurrection to eternal Life: if the Death of Christ have that good effect upon us, as to weaken the Strength, and extinguish the Life of Sin in us, nothing can hinder us from living unto God here, and with him for ever hereafter.

But lest any should mistake here, and think that the leaving of Sin for a while would sufficiently answer the End of Christ's Death, or presume that a few Acts of a holy Life perform'd now and then, would intitle them to all the Benefits and Privileges of his Resurrection; the Apostle would have them know other and better things: and to that end acquaints them in the next Verse, *That Christ being rais'd from the Dead, dieth no more; Death hath no more Dominion over him*: meaning, that the Copy of Christ's Death, which we are to follow and write after, teaches us so to die unto Sin, as to live no longer therein, nor to suffer any Sin to have any more Dominion over us; and the Copy of his Resurrection, which we are to transcribe and imitate, directs us so to lead a Life of Grace, as not to come under the Power of spiritual Death any more: *for in that he dy'd, he dy'd unto Sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God*. The Sense whereof is, that when Christ dy'd for our Sin, he did it but once for all, and never underwent that Death again: Even so we who are baptiz'd into his Death, should bid a total and final Adieu to all Sin, and never more be brought into Bondage to any. But when he rose from the Dead, he rose not to one single Act of Life and no more, or so as to live a while, and then to cease from it again; but he rose to an eternal, immortal, endless Life, that fadeth not away: so our rising with Christ, and living unto God, betokens our rising to a spiritual Life of Grace, that never ends, but flows into an eternal Life of Glory, persevering here in all vertuous and godly Living, according to the Precept and Example of our Saviour Christ, who rose again never to die more, on purpose to quicken us to everlasting Life. In short, the Example of Christ's Death and Resurrection, to which we are here bid to conform, teaches us two very excellent and useful Lessons.

1. That

Epistle for the sixth Sunday after Trinity. 187

1. That our dying unto, or forsaking of Sin, must be total or universal, from all Sin, without allowing our selves in any.

2. That our living unto Righteousness must be constant, and hold out to the end.

1. I say, our forsaking of Sin must be total and universal, extending to all Sin, without the least Indulgence to any. This was the end of Christ's Death, so to kill all Sin in us, that none might continue or revive in us any more: *How shall we that are dead to Sin* (saith the Apostle) *live any longer therein?* A dead Man, you know, hath no Sensation or Perception of any thing; and if we are dead to all Sin, as Christ's Death teaches us to be, we shall have no Motion or Inclination to any. There are some who can well enough dispense with this or that Sin, which crosses not their Interest or Humour, but stick close to others, that better administer to their Lusts or Designs; and what they seem to take away from one Vice, they make up with advantage to another. The Apostle speaks of some who *abhor'd Idols*, but could greedily enough *commit Sacrilege*, Rom. 2. and we have known many, great Enemies indeed to Idolatry, who yet are well enough reconcil'd to Schism and Sacrilege. Such as these are not dead, but alive unto Sin, to which they most closely adhere; and are not so much alive, as dead unto Righteousness, whose ways they utterly forsake. Such partial and nominal Christians, like those in the Church of *Sardis*, have a Name to live, but are indeed dead as to all the Purposes of a spiritual Life; which will not permit in us the Love or Practice of any one known Sin, but lays the Axe to the very Root, and cuts down all the Branches of Iniquity. In a word, we are to imitate Christ's Death, by dying unto all Sin, not sparing *Agag*, or any darling Impiety, but laying aside every Weight, and the Sin that doth so easily beset us.

2. Our living unto Righteousness must be constant, and persevering unto the end; not living to it a while, and then leaving it, but making it the Work and Business of our whole Life, and continuing faithful in it, even unto Death. There are some who seem zealous and good Christians for a time, running with great Alacrity and Chearfulness the Ways of God's Commandments; but after a while flag, and tire, and forsake all: *Ye did run well* (saith the Apostle to the *Galatians*) *who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the Truth?* that is, ye began and set out well

well in your Christian Race, receiving the Gospel as it was preached unto you, and so were in a good way of Faith, and by it went happily forward towards the Mark of your high Calling in Christ Jesus ; but you have falter'd since, and not continu'd on in that Course, and so have lost the Prize for not holding out to the end of the Race : And so shall we too, if we persevere not, and keep not in it to the last. *You shall reap* (saith St. Paul) *a good Crop of Glory, if ye faint not ;* but if you give out and grow weary, ye shall reap only the sad Fruit of Shame and Confusion. In short, you must live on a Life of Grace to the end, if ever ye hope to arrive to a Life of Glory.

This is the Sense and Drift of the Epistle for this Day ; which shews us how we are to imitate Christ's Death, by dying unto Sin, and likewise how we are to shew forth the Virtue of his Resurrection, by living unto Righteousness.

The Application of the whole Discourse, the Apostle gives us in the last Verse of the Epistle, saying, *Likewise reckon ye also your selves to be dead indeed unto Sin, but alive unto God, thro Jesus Christ our Lord :* that is, take this home to your selves, and count upon it, that by your Baptism you are in a State of Death, as to all sinful Practices, never to love or live in such Courses any more ; and that by Christ's Resurrection you are rais'd to a new State of Life, to be led in the Practice of Holiness and Vertue, which you are to live for ever, without ever returning again to any vile or vicious Courses. And this *thro Jesus Christ our Lord*, that is, by the Aid and Assistance of his Holy Spirit, who is both the Author and Cherisher of this spiritual Life, from whom, as from the Root and Foundation, all our Graces spring.

All that remains is, to exhort you to answer these two great Ends and Effects of Christ's Death and Resurrection, by a total abandoning of all kinds of Sin, and by a constant Practice of all sorts of Vertue. These are the two Parts of that Sanctification, which we have by Baptism ; they are commonly express'd by Mortification, which is a dying unto Sin ; and Vivification, which is a living unto Righteousness. These likewise are the two great Parts of Repentance, which is a turning from Sin unto God. They are express'd in Scripture, sometimes by *eschewing Evil and doing Good* ; sometimes by *abhorring that which is Evil, and cleaving to that which is Good* ; sometimes by *denying Ungodli-*

Epistle for the sixth Sunday after Trinity. 189

ness and worldly Lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present World: All which are but different Expressions of what we are call'd upon to do this day, namely to die unto Sin, and to live unto God.

Let this therefore be henceforth our main Study and Exercise. To which end, let us often meditate on the Merits and Virtue of Christ's Death, and the Power of his Resurrection to work these things in us: the one to mortify and kill Sin in us, which is to put off the old Man; the other to quicken and enliven our Graces, which is to put on the new Man, that after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness. This is the great Work and Duty of Repentance, to which we are so often call'd, and encourag'd by many Promises; and the Neglect whereof is so severely threaten'd with many Punishments. *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, said St. John, upon our Saviour's first Coming into the World; that being his main Design in it, to bless Mankind by turning them from their Iniquities. *Repent, and be converted* (saith St. Peter) *that your Sins may be blotted out, when the times of Refreshment shall come from the Presence of the Lord*; Acts 3. 19. that being the only means to procure our Pardon, and to gain Admission into the Presence of God. *Except ye repent* (saith our Saviour) *ye shall all likewise perish*; Luke 13. 5. All which are so many Warnings and Exhortations to the great Duty of this Day, viz. to die unto Sin, and to live unto Righteousness. I shall conclude all with the following words of our Apostle, *Let not Sin reign therefore in your mortal Bodies, that ye should obey it in the Lusts thereof*; neither yield ye your Members as Instruments of Unrighteousness unto Sin, but yield your selves unto God as those that are alive from the Dead, and your Members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God: So shall you e'er long receive a Crown of Righteousness, which God the righteous Judg shall give you at the last Day: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XXIII.

The GOSPEL for the Sixth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Matthew v. 20——27.

Jesus said to his Disciples, Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the Judgment; but I say unto you, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day contains another Part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, wherein he vindicates the Law from all false Glosses, and refines it into a more pure and perfect Rule of Life and Manners. He had before told his Disciples, that *he came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it*, ver. 17. He freed them indeed from the Rites and Ceremonies, but not from the Rules and Precepts of *Moses's* Law. Instead of loosening the Obligation, he expected a stricter Obedience and Conformity to it. And because the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had corrupted the Law by false Glosses, and their Lives by false and glozing Pretences, he endeavours here to reform and regulate both; beginning with this Caution,

Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were the great Doctors and Rabbies among the Jews; the one being the Name of an Office, and the other of a Sect, and both eminent Teachers and Expounders of the Law: which they had done so falsely and corruptly, that our Saviour found it necessary to expound it over again, to rescue it from their evil Interpretations, and to bring it up to its just height
and

and perfection, as may be seen in the following part of the Chapter.

The Corruptions and false Constructions they made of the Law, were such as these : they taught, (1.) That if Men kept to the Letter of the Law, which they call'd *justi ad legem*, it was sufficient, tho they minded not the true Intent and spiritual Meaning of it. (2.) If they polish'd the outward Garb, and appear'd righteous before Men, it matter'd not how false and unjust they were within. (3.) If Men abstain'd from the open grosser Acts of Sin, they need not trouble themselves about the more secret Motives and Occasions of it. (4.) If Men perform'd the external Acts of Religion, 'twas needless to concern themselves about the Principle, End, or Manner of performing them.

These, and such other like these, were the Doctrines of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, which they taught others, and practis'd themselves ; by which they made void the Law of God, and rendred the Commandments of none effect by their Traditions.

This was the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, which had many Flaws and Imperfections in it ; for it was merely external, partial, and hypocritical ; it dwelt only in the Face and outward Appearance, without any Truth or Reality at all within. It consisted in slight Observances, and uncommanded Austerities, and was attended with Arrogance, Pride, and an insolent Contempt of others. They abstain'd from some Sins, which they could well enough dispense with, and allow'd themselves in others more crying and enormous. They perform'd some Duties, that suited well enough with their Humour and Interest, and neglected others of greater weight and necessity ; paying Tythe of Mint, Annise, and Cummin, and at the same time omitting the weightier matters of the Law. In a word, their Religion was founded on bad Principles, carry'd on by bad Means, and directed to bad Ends ; for their Acts of Piety and Mercy were all done for Vanity and Ostentation, and in all things they consulted more the Praise of Men, than the Glory of God.

Now our Saviour tells us, that our *Righteousness* must exceed this *Righteousness* of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, or else we shall never enter into the Kingdom of Grace here, or of Glory hereafter. But wherein must our Righteousness exceed theirs? Why,

1st, In the Truth and Sincerity of it : for God *loveth Truth in the inner parts* ; he looketh not as Man looketh, to the outward Appearance, but beholds the Heart, and receives or rejects us by the Truth or Falshood of that.

2dly, In the Extent and Integrity of it : it must reach to all God's Commandments, not picking and chusing as the *Pharisees* did, who made the keeping of one Law to compound for the breach of another ; but we must pay an uniform and universal Obedience to all God's Precepts, being all stamp'd with the same Authority, and having the same Equity and Reward : and *then shall we not be ashamed, when we have respect to all his Commandments.*

3dly, Our Righteousness must exceed theirs in the Lowliness and Humility of it ; disclaiming all its Worth, and arrogating nothing as due to it. The *Pharisees* trusted to their own Righteousness, and claim'd the Reward from the Merit of their own Works ; but we are to account ours as filthy Rags, and to desire to be found only in the Robes of Christ's Righteousness : when we have done all, we are to reckon our selves but unprofitable Servants, and trust only to Christ's Merits for our Justification. Again, the *Pharisees* boasted of their own Righteousness, that they were better than other Men, looking upon themselves as the only Favourites of Heaven, and despising others as only Men of the Earth : whereas we are to be lowly in Heart and Mind, esteeming others better than our selves ; and then shall we rise highest in God's Opinion, when we are lowest in our own.

Lastly, Our Righteousness must exceed theirs in the Purity of its End and Intention : they only courted the Honour and Applause of Men in all that they did, and so had all their Reward from them ; but we are to direct all our Aims and Intentions to the Glory of God, and that will best tend to and promote our own.

Thus we see wherein we are to exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, together with the Penalty of falling short of it. Now to help us herein, our Saviour detects their Corruption of several Laws by their Traditions, and directs to the true Meaning and just Extent of them.

The third Commandment they perverted by two false Glosses : the one, that the forbidding of taking God's Name in vain, prohibited only the swearing by the awful Name of God, but permitted them in lesser matters to swear by his Creatures, as by the Heavens, by the Earth,
by

Gospel for the sixth Sunday after Trinity. 193

by *Jerusalem*, by the Altar, the Temple, their Head, and the like; all which they taught had no Guilt in them, and signify'd nothing: the other was, that the Law against Swearing prohibited only Forswearing or false Swearing, and that too in matters of great moment, but extended not to things of lesser consequence, and so let them loose to all vain and idle Swearing: both which our Saviour condemn'd, by saying, *Swear not at all*, ver. 33, 34.

The fifth Commandment they evacuated by a Gift call'd *Corban*, of which they gave a double Interpretation; the one signifying an Oath against relieving of Parents, which they that had taken were (as they taught) excus'd thereby from relieving them; the other was interpreting *Corban* of a Gift consecrated unto God, signifying, that if they had consecrated their Substance unto God, or to his Temple, they were excus'd from relieving their Parents out of it, being already devoted to God's Service, and so may be more profitable to them than otherwise: both these ways they made the Law of God of no effect by their Traditions, *Mat.* 15.

Next, our Saviour vindicates the sixth Commandment from the wrong Interpretations of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, in the following words of this Day's Gospel: *Ye have heard (saith he) that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the Judgment.* Where by them of old time we are to understand *Moses* and the Prophets, as we read, *Exod.* 20. & *Deut.* 5. where this Precept against killing is extant. This the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* restrain'd only to actual Murder, or shedding of Blood; and so Maiming, Wounding, and other Acts of Violence that came short of Murder, with all the Occasions leading thereunto, went free: and the *Danger of the Judgment*, or Punishments annex'd to it, they taught were incur'd by none, but such as actually took away the Life of another, and imbru'd his Hands in his Blood.

But I say unto you (saith Christ) that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment: and whosoever shall say unto his Brother, *Racha*, shall be in danger of the Council; but whosoever shall say, *Thou Fool*, shall be in danger of Hell-fire. Where he enlarges the Sense of this Law, and shews it to extend to all rash Anger, Hatred, and reproachful Speeches, which lead to Murder, and often occasion Slaughter and Bloodshed.

Now here we may observe the three different Degrees of the Sins leading to Murder, together with the three different Degrees of the Punishments assign'd to them. The three Degrees of the Sins, or Occasions of Murder, are *causeless Anger*, opprobrious Words, by calling Men *Racha*, and *Thou Fool*. The three Degrees of the Punishments assign'd to them, are *the Danger of the Judgment*, *the Danger of the Council*, and *the Danger of Hell-fire*. All which will require a little Explication.

(1.) As for *causeless Anger*, that is, when Men are mov'd to Passion for no cause at all, or on a very slight occasion, which is as good as none; this often happens to fiery and hasty Spirits, which are inflam'd for Trifles, and break out into Rage upon little or no Provocation. A sudden Disgust, a jealous Surmise, a hasty Word shall make some Persons fly out into an absurd, violent, and unaccountable Passion, and catch fire at such small sparks, as are better quench'd than kindled; that is, at such light matters, as a wise Man would rather pass by than resent.

Again, Anger is causeless, when tho there may be some cause, yet the Passion runs higher than the Cause can warrant; when it grows immoderate, and transports beyond the Bounds of Reason and Religion. Certainly all Anger that exceeds the Merits of the Cause, is so far to be justly reckon'd causeless; in which case, as the Passion offers some violence to Nature, so does it often occasion some external Violence and Mischief, as may be seen in the Conversation of furious Persons.

Once more, Anger is causeless, when it lasts longer than the cause continues, when it refuses to be appeas'd or reconcil'd, and retains secret Grudges and Animosities; which frequently turns to Hatred, Malice, and Desires of Revenge. For which reason the Wise-man tells us, that Anger resteth in the Bosom of Fools, where it is apt to boil up, and break out in malicious and murderous Designs: and therefore the Apostle wills us not to *sin in our Anger*, by keeping it too long, nor to suffer the *Sun to go down upon our Wrath*; for that is to give place to the Devil, who is ever ready to carry such passionate Men into all manner of mischief: for this reason it is, that our Saviour here condemns all causeless Anger, as an Occasion of Killing and Murder.

Now the Punishment here assign'd to it, is to be in danger of the Judgment: *I say unto you, he that is angry with his*

Gospel for the sixth Sunday after Trinity: 195

his Brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment; that is, not only of future Judgment, but of a present Judgment here in this World: which in this place is meant of incurring the Censure and Sentence of the Sanhedrim, of which there were two Courts among the Jews, call'd the lesser and the greater Sanhedrim, the one consisting of 23 Judges, the other of 71; and both had the cognizance of criminal Causes, and could pass Sentence on Malefactors, tho not equally and alike, there lying an Appeal from the one to the other. And the Judgment here threatned to causeless Anger, is that of the first and inferiour Court, of whose Sentence it was in danger.

(2.) Another Sin forbidden here as an Occasion of Murder, is contumelious and reviling Language: and this is an Effect or Consequent of the former; for where rash Anger is kindled and flames in the Breast, there it breaks out in the Tongue by Contumelies and Reproaches, and vents it self in violent and virulent Speeches: two of which are here mention'd.

1. The calling his Brother *Racha*, which is an *Hebrew* or *Syriack* Word, and signifies a vain, witless, and worthless Fellow; a Term of great Derision and Reproach, and is indeed a *setting at nought our Brother*: which naturally incenses and creates those Feuds and Quarrels, that often end in Slaughter and Bloodshed. Now this being a farther Step to Murder, has a higher degree of Punishment assign'd to it; and that is, to be *in danger of the Council*: which was to be summon'd before the higher Court of *Sanhedrim*, who had a power of inflicting greater Punishments on such capital Offenders. Not that every calling our Brother *Racha*, from a just Rebuke of some Misunderstanding or Miscarriage, fell under their heavy Sentence; for St. James thus call'd his Brother *Racha*, Chap. 2. 20. Wilt thou know, O *vain Man*, in the *Hebrew Racha*, that *Faith without Works is dead*? But 'tis only the calling him so out of an evil and malicious Intention, with a design to undervalue and affront him, that incurs this Penalty.

2. The saying to our Brother, *Thou Fool*, is yet a higher Provocation, and not easily borne; for 'tis the greatest Reflection upon Mens Understanding and Credit, of both which Men generally are and ought to be very tender. 'Tis the calling him not only a witless, but a wicked Fellow; which deeply wounds his Reputation, and arraigns his whole Life: and this occasions very great Resentments,

O 2

which

which frequently lead Men to Outrage and Violence. And therefore a greater Punishment is annex'd to this, than any of the former ; and that is, to *be in danger of Hell-fire* : which signifies not only the incurring of the temporal Punishments of this Life, but the eternal Torments hereafter in Hell, represented by the Fire of *Tophet* in the Valley of *Hinnom*. But here we may note again, that 'tis not every calling another Fool, that brings Men into this danger ; for *Solomon* calls the wicked Man *Fool* throughout the whole Book of *Proverbs* ; and *St. Paul* said to him that doubted of the Resurrection, *Thou Fool, that which thou sowest is not quicken'd except it die*, 1 Cor. 15. 36. And he elsewhere rebuk'd the *Galatians*, saying, *O foolish Galatians, asking, who had bewitch'd them, that they should not obey the Truth ?* Gal. 3. 1. But the saying *Thou Fool* here, is with a desire or design of vilifying, deriding, or scoffing at another ; which moves to Vindication and Revenge, and is many times an Occasion of Murder : for which reason our Saviour interprets it as forbidden in this sixth Commandment, that says, *Thou shalt not kill*.

And therefore our blessed Saviour, to prevent all these Dangers and mischievous Consequents, exhorts Christians to consider and remove all these Occasions, especially before they enter upon the sacred Acts and Duties of Religion ; saying in the next words, *Therefore if thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way ; first be reconcil'd to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift*. Where the bringing the Gift to the Altar, relates to all the Offerings and Sacrifices under the Law, which were requir'd to be offer'd on the Altar, either for the Atonement of Sin, or the Commemoration of Mercies receiv'd : such were the Sin-Offering, the Peace-Offering, the Freewill-Offering, together with the daily and yearly Sacrifices ; all which tho' requir'd as Duties, yet were call'd and accepted as Gifts. Such likewise are the Christian Sacrifices and Oblations requir'd now under the Gospel, as Prayers, Praises, Fasting, Thanksgivings, hearing the Word, and especially receiving the holy Sacrament ; all which when we offer up in the Church, or at the holy Table, we are said to *bring our Gift to the Altar*.

And when we do so, and there call to mind, *that our Brother hath ought against us* ; that is, that we have been angry with him without a cause, or that we have abus'd or
flann;

Gospel for the sixth Sunday after Trinity. 197

slander'd him, or fix'd any ill Titles or Characters upon him, or any way hurted him in Body, Goods, or Name; what then? Why, *leave there thy Gift* (saith our Saviour) *before the Altar, and go thy way; first be reconcil'd to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift*: that is, betake thy self with all speed to the Person thou hast thus injur'd, and use all means to obtain his Pardon, by acknowledging thy Fault, and making all possible Reparation, that he may be friends with thee, and so be perfectly reconcil'd to each other. Till this be done, God will accept of no Gift at thy hands; and when thou hast thus done, then *come and offer thy Gift*: not that thou art to leave the Duty undone, or make this an Excuse for thy not offering the Gift at all; for that would be to excuse one Fault with another, which would not extenuate, but enhance the Guilt of both: but thou art rather to hasten the doing of the one, that thou mayst be the better fitted for the doing of the other: for he that is not yet reconcil'd, must not carry away his Gift, but leave it before the Altar, and go and be reconcil'd, and then come and offer his Gift; then may he compleat his intended Sacrifice, and the Oblation shall not only find Acceptance, but come up with a sweet-smelling Savour. So that the Sense of this Advice is, that before we enter upon any Religious Duty, we are to enter into our selves, and see how we stand affected towards our Neighbour; and if we find any thing amiss, we are to empty our Souls of all Grudges, Prejudices, and Surmises, and in all our Addresses unto God to come with Hearts fill'd with Love, Peace, and Reconciliation with all Men.

And this is to be done out of hand, without delay, which as in most cases, so more especially in this is very dangerous; and therefore we should not defer a matter of so great weight and necessity, upon which all our Acceptance with God depends, but set about it presently, before it be too late. So we are exhorted in the next words:

Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judg, and the Judg deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison: verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing. Where the guilty Person in this kind is represented under the Notion of a Debtor, both to God and Man; to God by breaking his Law, to Man by invading his Property.

ty. Now Debtors being still expos'd to great Dangers, all such Offenders are here advis'd to agree and compose their matters with God and Man, both whom they have made their Adversaries; with God by Repentance, with Man by Restitution. And because the deferring of these things will increase both the Danger and the Difficulty, they are here call'd upon to do it quickly, while they are in the way, and Terms of Accommodation and Agreement may be had; lest by delays they be, before they are aware, brought before the great Judg of Heaven and Earth, and he deliver them over to the Sergeant or Officer, that is, to Death or the Devil, to be cast into the Prison of Hell; where their Torment will be endless, easeless, and remediless, not being able to be releas'd or come out thence, till they have paid to Divine Justice the utmost Farthing: which being never able to do, they must for ever suffer, because they can never satisfy. This will be the Case of all that harbour any Malice or Hatred in their Heart, and therefore let us not put off this great business of reconciling ourselves to God and Man: now is the time allotted us for that purpose, the present time is all that we can call our own; and if we neglect that, we may have cause for ever to repent, but perhaps never have time to repair our Folly. Be wise therefore in time, and agree with thine Adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest thou be shortly sent there, where tho thou canst not pay the least, yet the utmost Farthing will be exacted from thee.

This is the whole of this Day's Gospel; which may teach us,

I. To carry our Righteousness above and beyond that of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*: they were curious about the Outside, and were fair and beautiful without, but within full of Filth and Rottenness. But let us endeavour to cleanse the Heart, and see that matters be right within. They stuck to the Letter of the Law, without minding the true Intent of it; but let us look more to the spiritual Sense and Meaning of it, and observe it in the full Extent of it. They condemn'd gross Sins, and conniv'd at less; and if they abstain'd from the outward Act, could allow themselves in the inward Motions, Occasions, and Tendencies to it: but let us lay the Ax to the very Root, and cut down every Branch of Iniquity. They rested in the external Acts of Religion, as of Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving,
without

Gospel for the sixth Sunday after Trinity. 199

without regarding the true Ends or Manner of performing them; but let us look more to our Aims and Intentions in these Duties, that they may be rightly directed to the Glory of God, and the Good of our own and others Souls. In a word, the *Pharisees* were proud, partial, and hypocritical in their Righteousness; and therefore let us exceed them in the Humility, Integrity, and Sincerity of ours: for since Heaven and Happiness lie beyond the Bounds and Extent of their Righteousness, we must inevitably perish and miscarry with them, if we go not farther than they.

2. Let our Obedience to God's Laws extend to the whole Design and Intention of them: In the affirmative Precepts, let it reach to all the Means, Motives, and Incentives requisite to the Observance of them; in the negative Precepts, let it take in all the Occasions, Steps, and Tendencies to the breach of them. Particularly in keeping the sixth Commandment against killing, here mention'd, let us avoid all rash and causeless Anger, all Malice and Hatred, that naturally lead to it; for Malice is a frequent Occasion and Forerunner of Murder, and *St. John* tells us, that *he that hateth his Brother is a Murderer*, 1 John 3. 15. for Hatred is attended with a Desire of taking away the Object of it, either by himself or another. Moreover, let us avoid all virulent and opprobrious Speeches, such as calling our Brother *Racha*, or Fool, a vain, empty, witless, and wicked Fellow; which commonly provoke to Rage, and draw on Murder. In short, *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from us, with all Malice*; especially when we draw nigh to holy things: and *be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*; reconciling our selves to our greatest Foes. And let that be done quickly, lest it be too late; and so by living in Peace and Charity with God and Man here, we shall live in eternal Peace and Joy with both hereafter: which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XXIV.

The EPISTLE for the Seventh Sunday after
Trinity.

Rom. vi. 19, to the end.

I speak after the manner of Men, because of the Infirmary of your Flesh; for as ye have yielded your Members Servants to Uncleaness, and to Iniquity unto Iniquity, even so now yield your Members Servants to Righteousness unto Holiness, &c.

THE Service for this Day beseeches the Lord of all Power and Might, who is the Author and Giver of all good things, to graft in our Hearts the Love of his Name, to increase in us true Religion, to nourish us with all Goodness, and of his great mercy to keep us in the same.

The Epistle for the Day is the latter part of the same Chapter, from whence that for the last Sunday was taken; where the Apostle having shew'd his new-converted *Romans* the Efficacy of Christ's Death for the killing of Sin, and the Virtue of his Resurrection for the quickning them to a Life of Righteousness, he exhorts them to conform to both, by dying to the one, and living to the other. To which end, he here in the close of the Chapter accommodates himself to their Weakness, and labours to convince them of the great danger of their former sinful Courses, and likewise of the Safety and Happiness that is to be found in the ways of Righteousness.

I speak after the manner of Men (saith he) *because of the Infirmary of your Flesh*: meaning, that he condescended to express these weighty Matters to them, in Terms and Similitudes suited to the Weakness of their Capacity and Understanding; setting forth their Duty to Christ by the known Resemblance and Relation of Master and Servant, and by the vulgar Terms of Liberty and Bondage, to which

which they were much inur'd. Or else his complying with the Infirmities of their Flesh, may be meant of his laying on them the most easy and moderate Burdens, requiring the least that in any reason could be requir'd of them; and so it signifies his dealing with them in the mildest and most equitable manner, by reason of the Weakness of their Flesh, which could not yet well bear any greater Rigour or higher Expressions. That this is the most probable Sense of those words, appears by what follows; where the Apostle seems to tell them, that all he would at present require of them is, that *as ye have yielded your Members Servants to Uncleanness, and to Iniquity unto Iniquity*, that is, have gone on from one degree of Sin unto another; *even so now yield your Members Servants to Righteousness unto Holiness*, or go on from one degree of Vertue unto another. The Sense whereof is, that they should be as diligent now in the Service of Christ, as they had been formerly in the Service of Sin, and as careful to use their Members to the purposes of Holiness and Vertue, as they had formerly been to yield them up to vile and brutish Affections. This in all reason (he tells them) he must require of them, and would as yet ask no more, tho in strictness of Justice he might require them to be far more exercis'd and delighted in the Service of God, than ever they were in the Service of Sin; forasmuch as the Service of the one is highly honourable and advantageous, and the Service of the other base and destructive; and he might with all reason exact more Care and Sollicitude to secure to them Heaven and Happiness, than they used before to run headlong to Hell and Damnation. But the Apostle here would have the Diligence of his new Converts in the ways of God to equal only their former Industry in the ways of Sin, till they were farther advanc'd, and then they would see reason enough that it should far exceed it.

And this he would have them the rather do, because (saith he) *when ye were the Servants of Sin, ye were free from Righteousness*. When you yielded up your selves to the Service of your Lusts, Righteousness or true Religion had nothing of your Service; what reason then is there, that Sin should have any of your Service now, when you have wholly devoted your selves to the Service of God? If Sin and Satan had all then, having chang'd your Master, why should not God and Christ have all now? Sure the Rules of Justice will oblige you to abstain as strictly now from

*

from all Evil, as ye did then from all Good : considering farther, that there is no dividing your Service between two Masters ; the Master you have taken to, must have all. If then when ye were the Servants of Sin, Righteousness had no power at all over you, now that you have put your selves under the Kingdom of Righteousness, you must no longer serve Sin, but utterly renounce all the Power and Tyranny of it : which, if you do but consider your own Ease and Interest, you will see infinite reason to do. For *what Fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is Death.* What profit did you ever receive from your former sinful Courses, which yielded you no better fruits than those of Shame and Death ? Where the Apostle urges a threefold Argument, to deter Men from the Love and Practice of all Sin.

The *First* is taken from the Unprofitableness of it ; *What Fruit had ye in those things ?*

The *Second*, from the Shamefulness of it, *Whereof ye are now ashamed.*

The *Third*, from the Destructiveness, or the fatal End and Issue of it ; *For the End of those things is Death.* Of which something particularly. And,

First, Of the Unprofitableness of all sinful Courses ; *What Fruit had ye in those things ?* The Question supposes none at all, or else very bad fruit, which is worse than nothing.

'Tis natural for Men to desire some Fruit of their Labours ; and 'tis an uncomfortable Reflection, to find at any time that we have labour'd in vain. The Voice of Nature is, *Who will shew us any good ?* and all Men are acted by the Hopes of Gain. Now the Apostle here plainly intimates, that Sinners reap no fruit from all the Pains and Labour they take in a wicked Course, that their Expectation is frustrated, and they toil day and night and catch nothing : for which reason Sin is elsewhere stil'd *the unfruitful Works of Darkness*, because they turn to no account, but deceive the Hopes of all that follow them ; *Eph. 5. 11.* So that Sinners may be truly said to serve the Devil for nought, and to weary themselves for very Vanity.

But there is a worse thing in this matter than this ; for Sin not only yields no good Fruit, but brings forth a great deal of bad and bitter Fruit. There is a Meiosis in the words, and more is intended by it, than seems to be express'd :

Epistle for the seventh Sunday after Trinity. 203

press'd : for when the Apostle asks, *What Fruit had ye then in those things?* 'tis as if he had said, What unspeakable Mischief, what vast Damage, what insufferable Evils have you found in these things? So that he hereby gives us to understand, that Sin is not only an unprofitable, but a very mischievous thing; and instead of yielding any sweet or good Fruit, brings forth nothing but wild Grapes, such as set the teeth on edge at present, and end at last in weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. To clear this, consider,

1st, What bad Fruit these things bring to the Body, of which we are all so fond and tender. Does Sin conduce to the Ease, Health, or Comfort of this beloved Part? No, quite otherwise : 'tis so far from the Benefit, that 'tis the very Bane of the Body ; for it impairs the Health, decays the Strength, and destroys all the Comfort of it. What a numerous Train of Evils and Diseases is a vicious Life attended withal? And what apparent Mischief does it bring upon all that follow it? How does Excess and Intemperance drown the Spirits? And tho it seems to raise them for the present, yet sinks them after into the deeper Sadness. Does not Envy pine and macerate the Body? Do not Malice and Revenge often shorten Mens Lives, and make the bloody and deceitful Man not to live out half his days? How do worldly Cares and Carking eat out the Heart, and bring on one Consumption to avoid another? Leudness and Debauchery antedate the Miseries of the Grave, and make Men rotten before they are dead. So destructive is Vice to human Nature, that they who commit it, *sin* (as the Apostle tells us) *against their own Body*.

Neither doth the Soul, that divine and nobler Part of us, reap any better, but rather much worse Fruit, from a sinful Course of Life; for it robs it of its Peace, fills it with Trouble and Disquiet at present, and deprives it at last of all future Happiness : *There is no peace, saith my God, unto the Wicked, but they are like the troubled Sea, that cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt*; Isa. 57. 20. Solomon tells us, that *he that sinneth against God wrongeth his own Soul*, Prov. 8. 36. And St. Peter, that *fleshly Lusts war against the Soul*, 1 Pet. 2. 11. They deface the Beauty, and sink the Glory of the Soul beneath the Beast that perisheth; they take away its Freedom, and make it a Drudg and a Vassal to the vilest Lusts. In a word, they bereave our
immortal

immortal Souls of the Vision and Enjoyment of God, wherein consists their truest Glory and Felicity.

But because some Men are more fond of their Substance, than of their Souls; let us see what Fruit a wicked Life brings to their Goods or Estate: And here 'tis evident, what havock Sin makes of Mens Estates, how it shipwrecks the Fortunes, and scatters the Substance of the wealthiest Persons. A loose and profligate Life brings on Poverty as one that travelleth, and Want as an armed Man, and entails Misery and Distress upon Posterity; Fraud and Deceit bring a Moth and a Canker into ill-gotten Goods, which eats out all the Comfort of them, and leaves only the Rust to testify against them; Oppression and Injustice intitle to a Curse instead of a Blessing, and the Wrath of God enters the House of the Thief and the Robber: In a word, a wicked Life instead of mending, mars Mens Fortunes here, and at last deprives them of an everlasting Inheritance.

But what Fruit do Men reap in their Name and Reputation by a sinful Life? Why, that the

Next Argument in the Text will inform us, *viz.* the Shamefulness of Sin, in these words, *Whereof ye are now asham'd.* Which give us to understand, that Sin is attended with Shame, and leads only to Confusion of Face. This not only Sacred Writ, but daily Experience doth confirm to us. Holy *Job* tells us, that they *who hate the Lord shall be clothed with Shame*; *Job* 8. 22. And the Psalmist, that they *shall be cover'd with their own Confusion, as with a Cloak*; *Psal.* 109. 29. And the Wise Man, that *Shame is the Portion and Promotion of Fools*; *Prov.* 3. 35. Who is there that doth not see the Truth hereof verify'd by daily Experience? Doth not Sin sink the Character, and blast the Reputation even of the greatest Persons? Yea, doth not the bare Suspicion of Vice reflect and stain the Glory of the best Abilities? Where was it ever known that Men were commended for their Wickedness? Who ever reckon'd his Vices among the Titles of his Honour, or sought to perpetuate his Memory by the Glory of his Crimes? Do not these things clothe Men with Shame, and load them with Dishonour? and that not only with a few knowing and judicious Persons, but with all Mankind, who mark Sin with Disgrace, and brand such as practise it with Reproach and Infamy. This is evident,

Epistle for the seventh Sunday after Trinity. 205

1st, From the many Arts that Sinners use to hide and conceal their Wickedness: *He that doth evil* (saith our Saviour) *cometh not to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd*; John 3. 19, 20. And,

2^{dly}, From the many Shifts and Evasions Men fly to, to lessen and excuse it: of which no other Account can be given, but the Shame that attends it; for else they would not be so backward to own, nor so forward to conceal it. Indeed Sin and Shame came into the World at once, and have ever since gone hand in hand together. Our first Parents had no sooner sinned, but they presently hid themselves, and their Posterity have been gathering Fig-leaves, to hide their Nakedness ever since.

Now this Shame proceeds partly from the natural Turpitude and Deformity of Sin, which hath that Baseness and Ugliness in it, that renders it odious and loathsome in the sight of God and Man; and therefore cannot but create Shame and Blushing in those that practise it.

And partly from the Power of natural Conscience, which, as God's Deputy, marks and reprehends the Sinner when he doth amiss; bringing Trouble to the Mind, and Shame upon the Countenance: For where there is a Consciousness of Guilt within, there will be Blushing and Confusion without. And

Partly, likewise from the just Judgment of God, who inflicts this as a Punishment of Vice, and makes Shame the Companion of Folly. So we find him threatening the Jews, *I will bring an everlasting Reproach upon them, and a perpetual Shame, that shall not be forgotten*; Jer. 23. 40. And elsewhere, *They shall be greatly ashamed, and cover'd with everlasting Confusion*; Jer. 20. 11. Indeed, 'tis but just with God to fix a Brand of Infamy upon the Brow, that is bent against him; and to cover that Face with Confusion, that sets it self against Heaven: 'Tis a righteous thing (saith the Apostle) *to render Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul that doth evil*.

Thus we see how justly the Apostle upbraided these Romans, and in them all sorts of Sinners, with the Unfruitfulness and Shamefulness of their former evil Courses; saying, *What Fruit had you then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed*?

But he minds them of a worse thing yet, than all this, and that is the fatal End and Issue of all Sin and Wickedness;

ness; *For the End of all these things is Death.* The Wisdom of a Man is best seen in propounding to himself a good End, and pursuing it by right and proper Means. Now tho all Men desire Good, and propound Happiness for their End, yet too many mistake the Way, that leads to it: To seek for it in the Ways of Sin, is to seek the Living among the Dead; for Sin is the Cause and Occasion of all our Misery, and to hope for Happiness that way, is to seek Life and Salvation in the Paths that lead to Death and Destruction; for the End of those things is Death.

Now the Death here mention'd as the End of these things, is both temporal and eternal Death; the former is the Separation of the Soul from the Body for awhile, the latter is the Separation of Body and Soul from Christ for evermore.

For the first, That temporal Death is the Effect and Punishment of Sin, is evident from the Sentence pronounc'd upon the first Transgression; *In the Day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* 'Twas our first Parents Disobedience that brought Mortality and Death upon all their Offspring, who have ever since felt the Stroke of it. So the Apostle testifies; *As by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, even so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned;* Rom. 5. 12.

But the Death here chiefly intended by the Apostle, is eternal Death, which is the everlasting Destruction both of Body and Soul; call'd in Scripture the second Death, because it follows the former, and knows no Ease or End. This is the sorest and worst of Evils that can befall us: for whereas all other Miseries find some Remedy or Relief, and have their Period in the Grave; this goes farther, and hath all the Doors of Hope shut against it: it leaves Men to groan under endless, easeless, and remediless Torments. And yet this is the Portion of all wilful and impenitent Sinners, and will be the bitter End and Wages of Unrighteousness.

But how doth Sin thus bring forth Death, or lead to this wretched and fatal End? Why, it hath both a natural Tendency, as an efficient Cause, to produce it; and a moral Tendency, as a meritorious Cause, to deserve it.

I. I say, Sin hath a natural Tendency, as an efficient Cause, to produce Death: for it destroys the Health, Strength, and Vigour of the Body, and so brings on temporal

poral Death; and likewise destroys the Power, Peace and Tranquillity of the Soul, and so leads to spiritual and eternal Death. Intemperance as naturally overwhelms the Spirits, as Water drowns what is cast into it; and the Flames of Lust as necessarily waste and consume, as the Fire burns any combustible Matter: so that Death is the necessary Consequent of Sin, and proceeds from it as naturally as an Effect does from its Cause.

2. Sin hath a moral Tendency as a meritorious Cause to deserve Death; for there is a Guilt in Sin that obliges to Punishment, and Death is said to be the Wages of Sin, which Justice therefore requires to be paid: and this we may be assur'd will be done either in this World, or in that which is to come.

This is the bad Fruit, and the bad End of all vicious Courses, which are attended with Mischief and Shame here, and endless Misery and Torment hereafter; of which the Apostle here minds the converted Romans.

But now (saith he) being made free from Sin, and become the Servants of God, ye have your Fruit unto Holiness, and the End everlasting Life: that is, you being deliver'd from the Slavery ye were in unto Sin, and brought over to the Service of God, you have other and better Fruit than you had before; Fruit that will improve you in Grace and Holiness now, and e'er long bring you to endless Glory and Happiness: for as *Death is the Wages of Sin*, being as due to it as Wages to Work, and Hire to the Labourer; so the *Gift of God is eternal Life*: which God of his infinite Grace and Goodness hath made the Portion of the Righteous, and assign'd as the Reward of a holy and vertuous Life; and that thro Jesus Christ our Lord, that is, by the Merits of his Death, and the Virtue of his Satisfaction.

This is the Scope of this Day's Epistle; from which we may infer a few things. As,

1st, From St. Paul's speaking to these Romans after the manner of Men, because of the Infirmities of the Flesh, we may learn to condescend to the Capacities of our Hearers, and to accommodate our Speeches to the Weakness of their Understandings; otherwise we do but beat the Air, and prove Barbarians to one another.

2dly, The Apostle's advising them to make those Members the Servants of Righteousness, which they had before us'd as the Instruments of Sin, teaches us to bestow at least the

the same pains in the Service of God, that Sinners do in the Drudgeries of their Lusts; and then we shall soon find the Comfort more, and the Reward greater. Did Men go as cheerfully and heartily to Church, as they do to a Market, and take as much care to provide for their Souls, as they do for their Bodies; did they mind the next World, as frequently as they do this, and be as solicitous to obtain Heaven hereafter, as they are to gain and secure a little Spot of Earth here; they would find their Labour turn to a far better Account, and their Pains recompens'd with a higher and nobler Reward.

3dly, From the Unfruitfulness, Shamefulness and Destructiveness of all sinful Courses, let us learn to abhor and abandon them. Who but a Madman would labour for nothing, and weary himself for what is worse than nothing? And yet so do all they that have Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness: we have seen what bitter Fruit the Soul, Body and Estate reap from these things; so that to continue in them is but to court Misery, and be fond of our own Destruction.

Again, Who is there but shuns Disgrace, and flies from Shame and Confusion of Face? And yet the Wise-man tells us, this is the Promotion of Fools: and therefore if Interest will not, let the Shame of the World prevail with us to leave all vile and vitious Courses; but if neither of these can, let the fatal End and Issue of Sin dissuade us from it: we see the End of it is Death; and who, that considers what he doth, would follow that which leads to so miserable an End?

In a word then, let us *die unto Sin*, that we may escape *eternal Death*; and let us *live unto Righteousness*, that having our Fruit unto Holiness, our End may be everlasting Life: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XXV.

The GOSPEL for the Seventh Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Mark viii. 1—10.

In those Days the Multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his Disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have Compassion on the Multitude, because they have now been with me three Days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their own Houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far, &c.

THIS Miracle of the Loaves is order'd by the Church to be read three times in the Year, in the Gospels for three several Sundays: the first on the fourth Sunday in *Lent*, of which before; the second on this seventh Sunday after *Trinity*, of which now; the third on the last Sunday after *Trinity*, of which hereafter. And this perhaps was appointed, partly for the Greatness, and partly for the Commodiousness of the Miracle; it being fit to instruct, and apt to take with the Multitude, who are sooner won and wrought upon by Arguments taken from the present Profits and Provisions of this Life, than from future, tho' more heavenly Food.

There is indeed some circumstantial Difference between the three Evangelists in the relating of it. As,

(1.) In the Circumstance of Time when it was done: *St. Matthew* relates it as done just after the News of the beheading of *John the Baptist*; *Mat.* 14. *St. Mark* here, immediately after a Miracle wrought upon a deaf and dumb Man; *St. John* about the time of the Passover, *John* 6. 4.

(2.) For the Number of the Persons that did eat : *St. Mark* here mentions about *four thousand*; *St. John* about *five thousand*; *St. Matthew* about *five thousand Men, beside Women and Children*, Mat. 14. 21. Again,

(3.) For the Number of the Loaves and Provisions : *St. Mark* here relates *seven Loaves, and a few small Fishes*; *St. Matthew* and *St. John* but *five Loaves, and two small Fishes*. Then,

Lastly, For the Fragments that were left and taken up : *St. Mark* here mentions but *seven Baskets* that were fill'd with them; *St. Matthew* and *St. John* *twelve Baskets full*. But these Differences are only in a few small Circumstances, and may easily happen among Relaters and Transcribers : tho some, and perhaps probably enough, suppose this Miracle to be done more than once; and if it were repeated, these little Differences may be easily reconcil'd. But however that be,

The Substance of the Relation is the same in all the Evangelists, who all agree that the Operation was miraculous, it being infinitely above the power of any natural Agent to feed four, as well as five thousand, with those small Provisions; and 'twas equally impossible, in any natural way, to fill seven as well as twelve Baskets with the poor Remainders.

But to come to the Gospel; it begins the Relation of this Miracle thus, *In those Days the Multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his Disciples, and saith unto them, I have Compassion on the Multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat, &c.* Where, in the Account of this Matter, we may observe,

First, The Number of the Persons that were here in want and distress; and they were *a Multitude, and a very great Multitude* : This was a Circumstance that mov'd our Saviour's Bowels, and ought indeed to open and enlarge ours. The great Numbers of the Indigent and Needy, that are made so by the Casualties of Fire, or other unavoidable Accidents, are to open our Hearts and Hands to their Relief : Of this sort were the Multitude here fed by our Saviour; they were not the Idle and the Lazy, that would not labour to feed themselves, but such as had been for some time in a desert Place, where no Provisions could be had, and so could get nothing to eat : and what the Desert was to them then, that

Gospel for the seventh Sunday after Trinity. 211

that decrepit old Age, long Sickness, Multitude of Children, Want of Work, and such like helpless Calamities, are to others now; they are disabled from sustaining themselves, and so are cast upon the Bounty of the Rich: and where the Number of these is great, there our Care and Charity must be the greater: not that we are to give to every one that asketh, no nor yet to every one that needeth; for that would exhaust our Substance, and reduce us to want our selves. Christ indeed was able to feed Thousands by Miracle; his Power was equal to his Will, and both were infinite and without Bounds; his Mercy is over all his Works, and is able to supply all their Wants: but we are finite and limited both in our Being and Substance; our Goodness extendeth not to all, and therefore we are to give only out of the Ability and Abundance that God hath given: but where the Objects are more numerous, there the Hand is to be the more bounteous, knowing, that *he that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.* Again,

Secondly, We may observe here the Extremity of Want and Necessity that this Multitude were in; *They have nothing to eat* (saith the Text) and *they have been with me three days* (saith our Saviour) without any Sustenance or Provision: so that they were ready to starve and pine away for Hunger. The Multitudes here fed by him were in a Place remote from all Accommodation; and having been there for some days without Food, were driven to the utmost Necessity, just upon the point of fainting and languishing. Now in this sad and deplorable Case, 'tis said,

Thirdly, That Jesus call'd his Disciples to him, and said, *I have Compassion on the Multitude, because they have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their own Houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far.* Times of Misery are the Seasons of Pity: this mov'd our Saviour's Compassion towards them, and his Bowels turn'd within him, and so should ours in the like case. The Multitude had attended him as long as they were able, and now could go no farther without fainting, nor subsist any longer without Sustenance. God suffers his own People sometimes to be in Straits, and to labour under great Difficulties and Necessities; but then *as a Father pitieth his Child,* whom he loveth,

So doth the Lord pity them that fear him. In the Mount of the Lord it will be seen, was a proverbial Saying among the Jews, to signify, that God will help his People out of the greatest Straits, and appear for them in the height of their Extremities. So he did for the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, giving them Food from Heaven, when earthly Provisions fail'd them; when they were hungry and thirsty, and their Souls ready to faint within them, he supported them by Miracles, and fed them with extraordinary and celestial Provisions. So did Christ here for the Multitude that follow'd him; he nourish'd them in a Desert, where little or nothing could be had, by an extraordinary Providence; and by his multiplying Virtue furnish'd a Meal for vast Numbers out of a small Pittance: their Necessity was his Opportunity, and his Compassion was highest when their Condition was lowest, and thereby teaches us to shew Bowels of Pity and Compassion upon those that are in the greatest Want. Our Blessed Saviour commended the good Samaritan for pitying and providing for the wounded Traveller, when he could find no Relief from the hard-hearted Priest and Levite in his greatest Distress; whereas he, good Man, commiserated his Condition, brought him to an Inn, pour'd in Wine and Oil into his Wounds, and at his own Expence took the care of him. This Christ commended as an Act worthy of Imitation, and bid his Disciples go, and learn to do likewise; Luke 10. 33, 37. *He that hath this World's Goods* (saith St. John) *and seeth his Brother lack and perish with Hunger, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?* And indeed they that suffer any to starve for lack of Necessaries, will be charg'd with the Death of those whom they might and ought to have reliev'd.

Fourthly, We may observe farther, that the Persons here reliev'd, or fed by Christ, were those that attended his Person, and follow'd him both to hear his Doctrine, and behold his Miracles. *I have Compassion* (saith he) *on the Multitude, because they have been with me, moving from place to place with me, to see my Works, and to receive mine Instructions; and for the space of three days have had no manner of Sustenance, and I cannot see them lack Necessaries, who have dearly loved and stuck to me in all my Travels.* He will not suffer them to want corporal Food, who come to him for spiritual; neither will he deny them the temporal Food of their Bodies, who labour for the im-
mortal

Gospel for the seventh Sunday after Trinity. 213

mortal Food of their Souls. And this may teach us to prefer in our Charity those that attend the Service of God, and adhere to the Ways and Duties of Religion; and to relieve the honest, vertuous and pious Poor, before the wicked, careless and wandring Beggars: the best Charity to these is Correction, and forcing them to work; for *Solomon* hath order'd a Scourge for the Sluggard, and a Rod for the Fool's Back, *Prov.* 26. 3. And our Laws have appointed the same for all lazy and sturdy Beggars, who will not labour in any Calling to get an honest Livelihood, but idly live upon the Labours of others, without taking any care either to serve God or themselves. The Apostle wills us in *doing good*, to have an *especial Regard to them that are of the Household of Faith*, *Gal.* 6. 10. We cannot indeed relieve all, our Stock or Substance will not reach to that, neither are we to impoverish our selves to feed others, nor to be so profuse in our Charity, as to render our selves the Objects of it; for Charity may and ought to begin at home, tho it must not end there: we are, in the first place, to mind and provide for our own Subsistence, and then to give to others what we can spare from our own Necessities and Abundance.

And here too our Charity must be guided by the Rules of Prudence and Discretion; that is, so to distribute to the Exigencies of others, as not to rob or wholly to deprive our selves: nor yet to be so liberal in our Distribution to one or more, as to have nothing left for the Succour of others. But above all, we are to have our first and principal regard to the honest and laborious Poor, who by Age, Sicknes, Want of Work, or any unavoidable Casualties, are reduc'd to Poverty; and to relieve them before and above others, who are poor because they will not endeavour to be otherwise, and instead of working with their Hands the thing that is good, reach out their Hands to picking and stealing, and to do all manner of Evil. Moreover, we are taught here only to relieve Mens present Wants, and not to provide against all future Contingencies, which Mens own Care and Providence ought prudently to foresee and prevent. These Lessons we learn from the Persons to whom this Miracle did extend.

But what was the Disciples Answer to our Saviour's compassionate Care and Concern for the Relief of this numerous and necessitous Multitude? Why, *the Disciples an-*

swered him, *From whence can a Man satisfy these Men with Bread here in the Wilderness?* An Answer much like that of the murmuring and distrustful *Israelites*; *Can God furnish a Table in the Wilderness?* He smote the stony Rock indeed, so that the Waters gushed out, and the Streams flowed withal; but can he give Bread also, and provide Flesh for his People? *Psal. 78. 19, 20.* They forgot what God had done (saith the Psalmist) and the wonderful Works that he had shewed for them; viz. The marvellous things he did in the sight of our Forefathers in the Land of *Egypt*; how he divided the Sea, and let them go thorow, and made the Waters to stand on a heap, which fell down and overwhelm'd their Enemies; how he led them with a Cloud by Day, and in the Night with a Light of Fire, &c. things great enough to be had in everlasting Remembrance, and to banish all Doubts of his Power, and Willingness to provide for them. And yet they kept not his Goodness in Remembrance, but were disobedient at the Sea, even at the Red-Sea, where such great things had been done for them; as we read at large in that seventy eighth Psalm. The like Stupidity seem'd here to possess the Minds of the Disciples, who had let slip the Memory of Christ's mighty Works, and forgot the Operations of his Hand; else, instead of asking how they should be satisfy'd with Bread here in the Wilderness, they would say with *David*, *Thou shalt prepare a Table for me in the sight of mine Enemies; thou shalt anoint my Head with Oil, and my Cup shall be full: Psal. 23.* But what Reply did our Saviour make to these distrustful Words? Why, Christ takes no notice of their Diffidence, knowing it to proceed from the Weakness of their Faith, and the Infirmary of their Mind, but applies himself to another Method for their Conviction; asking them, *How many Loaves have ye?* intending to add such a multiplying Virtue and Blessing to them, as should fill them with Astonishment, and make them lay aside all Doubts and Fears about future Provisions. The Answer they gave as to the Number of the Loaves, was *seven*; in *St. Matthew* it is but *five barley Loaves, and two small Fishes*: Slender Viands for so great a Multitude, especially having come so long a Journey, and being in so hungry and fainting a Condition.

However, Our Saviour commanded the People to sit down on the Ground; which being a green grassy Place, as *St. John* tells us, gave them the Convenience of sitting or leaning upon one another, the Posture us'd in those Days in eating.

And

And when they were thus plac'd, *He took the seven Loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his Disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the People.* Where his giving of Thanks before his distributing the Creatures to them, signifies his rendring Acknowledgments to God for his Bounty, and making outward and solemn Expressions of it, before we use or receive his Creatures for our Refreshment: whose excellent Example herein may teach us to do the same, to render unto God the Praise of his Gifts, and to *lift up our Eyes unto him, who openeth his Hand, and filleth all things living with Plenteousness; setting out to every one their Portion, and giving them their Meat in due season.* This is a Tribute of Homage we owe to the Almighty Donor for all his Blessings, and is a piece of Service highly profitable for us, and acceptable to him.

It follows, *And they had a few small Fishes; and he blessed, and he commanded them to set them also before them:* Where his blessing the few Fishes, denotes not only his Acknowledgments to God for his Liberality, but his sanctifying them to us for our Support and Comfort; for all the Creatures are sanctify'd by the commanding Word of God, and his Blessing is deriv'd upon them by Prayer and Thanksgiving.

But what Comfort did the Multitude reap from those small Provisions? Why, that the next words tell us; *So they did all eat, and were filled.* Wonderful! that so small a Quantity of Provisions should increase and multiply to the filling of so vast a Multitude: for the next Verse tells us, that they were about four thousand; and *St. Matthew*, that they were about five thousand, beside Women and Children. And what is more strange than all this, 'tis here said that they took up of the broken Meat, that was left, seven Baskets; or, as *St. Matthew* hath it, twelve Baskets full; which was vastly more than was at first before them: after which *they were all sent away fully satisfy'd.*

But tho this Miracle be prodigiously great and astonishing, yet there is something far more wonderful and amazing, that occurs every day to a wise Observer; and that is the feeding and filling not of Thousands only, but of Millions of Creatures, with daily and hourly Provisions by natural and ordinary Means; which being common and constant, are not so much admir'd as some rare and uncommon Occurrences, which in themselves are far less wonderful. However, both are Matters of our loudest Praises and

Thanksgivings: and *whoso is wise will ponder these things, and he shall understand the Loving-kindness of the Lord.*

Thus we see the Miracle held forth in the Gospel for this Day; the Improvement and Application whereof being made at large in the Gospels for the fourth Sunday in *Lent*, and the last Sunday after *Trinity*, I shall not need to repeat it here, but refer the Reader to them.



DISCOURSE XXVI.

The EPISTLE for the Eighth Sunday after *Trinity*.

Rom. viii. 12——18.

Brethren, we are Debtors, not to the Flesh, to live after the Flesh; for if ye live after the Flesh ye shall die; but if ye, thro the Spirit, do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches God, whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things, both in Heaven and Earth, to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us.

Now the things hurtful to us are chiefly the Works of the Flesh, which lead to Death and Damnation; and the things profitable for us are the Fruits of the Spirit, which lead to Life and Salvation. Accordingly, the Epistle for the Day treats of both these, exhorting us to put away the one, and to put on the other. It begins with the kind Compellation of Brethren; *Brethren* (saith he) *we are Debtors, &c.* Where the Apostle takes these new-converted *Romans* into the Relation of a spiritual Fraternity, stiling them Brethren, hoping by that loving and endearing Title the better to in-
stil

stil his Advice and Precepts into them. To which end, he first puts them in mind of the great Debt that lies upon all Christians, by virtue of that Holy Profession they have taken upon them; *Brethren, we are Debtors*: that is, we have many Obligations lying upon us by our receiving the Gospel, and embracing Christianity; being bound, by the Condition of our spiritual Being, to lead another Course of Life than we did before. And this Debt is contracted not barely by our Christian Profession, which obliges us to all Purity and Holiness; but likewise by the Covenant and Promise we thereby enter into; as also by the many Benefits and Privileges that we are entitled to, and receive by it: all which are strong Engagements to leave our former sinful Courses, and to live in Newness of Life, now we have embrac'd the Christian Faith.

But the Apostle proceeds, in the next words, to declare more particularly the Debt that lies upon us on these accounts; which he expresses first negatively, *We are Debtors* (saith he) *not to the Flesh, to live after the Flesh*: that is, tho our fleshly Part hath many natural Appetites and Desires, that call upon us to be gratify'd; and we are so far indebted to Nature, as to be oblig'd to answer and satisfy the regular Demands of it; yet we are not bound to hearken to the irregular Motions of corrupt Nature, or to follow the Sway of our sinful Lusts: yea, we are oblig'd to the contrary, to mortify our earthly Members by Fasting and Prayer, and to make no provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof. To which the Apostle adds a strong Reason or Inducement; *For if ye live after the Flesh ye shall die*: If ye give up your selves to the Command of a carnal and sensual Appetite, and suffer your selves to be carry'd away by the Temptations of your fleshly Lusts, ye will inevitably expose your selves to the Destruction of Body and Soul; Death will be the certain End and Issue of such unmortify'd Lusts: for *to be carnally minded is Death*, ver. 6. And that not a temporal Death only, or a short Separation of Body and Soul, but eternal Death, which is a Separation of both from God for ever. For *the carnal Mind is Enmity against God*; it is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can be: and what carries such a direct Enmity and Opposition against God, can never be so reconcil'd as ever to enjoy him. So that we cannot be Debtors to the Flesh, to live after the Flesh, which is attended with such a fatal Destruction.

But

218 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

But how then are we said to be Debtors? Why, 'tis *to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit*, who hath regenerated and begotten us again to a new Life; 'tis to him we owe our Reception into Christ's Church, and being call'd thereby into a State of Salvation. This hath laid upon us a Debt of Thankfulness and Obedience, which we are to be always paying; and that is to be done by living after the Spirit, by observing and obeying its godly Motions, and by governing our selves and Actions by the Gifts and Graces of it: for *as to live after the Flesh* is to follow the corrupt Inclinations of the Flesh, and to obey it in the Lusts thereof; so *to live after the Spirit* is to follow the Conduct of God's Holy Spirit, and to observe the Dictates and Directions of that Divine Guide. As for the former, we have no Obligation, but to renounce and forsake all the Works of the Flesh, which are hurtful to all that indulge themselves in them: for the latter, we are indebted to labour for, and to bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit, which are highly useful and profitable for us. And to this our Christian Profession, and the Hopes we have from it, strongly oblige us: for 'tis but reasonable that we should act and live up to what we pretend to; and being enter'd upon a new and better Covenant, that is establish'd upon better Promises than we had before, we should answer it by a suitable Conversation. Hence St. Peter, mentioning the exceeding great Dignity and Advantages of our Christian Profession, styling Christians, *A chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a peculiar People*; wills them not to do any thing unworthy of themselves, that might debase the Honour, or deprive them of the Benefit of their high and holy Calling. And because nothing could more endanger both, than living after the Flesh, he beseeches them, *as Strangers and Pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul*; 1 Pet. 2. 9, 10, 11. And to this St. Paul here gives us abundant Encouragement; for tho he before told us, that if we live after the Flesh, we shall die, yet he adds, that *if we thro the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, we shall live*. And tho to be carnally minded is Death, yet *to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace*: where, as eternal Death is the Wages and Consequent of a sinful and sensual Course of Life; so eternal Life will be the End and Reward of a spiritual and heavenly Conversation. The Proof whereof the Apostle gives us in the following words:

Epistle for the eighth Sunday after Trinity. 219

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God; meaning, that being led by the Spirit of God, and living by the Dictates and Directions of it, we become the Sons and Children of God, and consequently he will deal with us as his Children, and bestow upon us the Inheritance of eternal Life. And this Sonship we have not barely by Right of Creation; for in that respect all, even the worst of Men, are said to be the Sons of God; but by a new Title of Regeneration and Adoption, whereby from Aliens and Outcasts we are taken into Christ's Family, and entitled to all the Privileges of the Sons of God. This he farther confirms in the next words, saying, *For ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father*: meaning, that we are not now in the Condition of Servants or Slaves, who are call'd upon to do their work, and instead of Wages are in continual fear of the Lash; neither are we now, as the Jews sometimes were, in Bondage to the beggarly Elements of the World, or the childish Rudiments of *Moses's* Law, which was a State of Servility and Thralldom: but now our Condition in Christ is mightily alter'd; we have another Spirit that carries us above all such servile and slavish Fears, and gives us the Boldness and Confidence of Children, even the Spirit of Adoption, which enables us to go freely to him, and cry, *Abba, Father*: a Form of Speech whereby Children were wont to address their Parents, signifying that we are allow'd to come to God, not as Servants to a hard Master, but as Sons to a tender and loving Father, expecting all fatherly Usage from him, even Assistance to perform his Commands, and Assurance to receive the Reward of them.

But how are we confirm'd in the Belief and Certainty of our Sonship? Why, that the next words declare, *The Spirit it self beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God*; meaning, that we have the Testimony of God's Holy Spirit, concurring with our own Spirits, to confirm us in the Truth of our filial Relation to him. Our own Spirit of it self is fallible, and might be apt to flatter and deceive us in this matter; but the Testimony of God's Holy Spirit is infallible, and cannot deceive us: The Heart of Man is deceitful, saith the Prophet, and not to be trusted alone; but the Spirit of God is a Spirit of Truth, that leads into all and nothing but Truth: and having the concurrent Testimony of both these for the Truth of our Sonship,

ship, we may safely rely upon it, that we are the Children of God. And this Evidence we have by the Spirit's bearing witness with our Spirits, testifying to our Consciences that we are more than Servants (the highest Privilege that the Jews could boast of) even the Sons of God. And yet this is not all; for

If Children, then Heirs, Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Jesus Christ. 'Tis, we know, the Custom of all Places and Countries, that Children should be Heirs to their Father: in like manner therefore God being our Father, we thereby become *Heirs of God*; and being our heavenly Father, we are thereby entitled as Heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven: to which we are *Joint-Heirs with Christ*; He indeed, as a Son by natural Generation, and so the First-born, and in that sense the only-begotten Son of God, and so sole Heir by Nature; we as Sons by Adoption and Grace, and by virtue of that having a share in the Inheritance, and so are Co-heirs with Christ. In earthly Kingdoms the Inheritance goes only to the elder Brother, but God makes all his Children Heirs, and Joint-Partakers of his heavenly Kingdom. But how come we, who had forfeited both our Sonship and Right to the Inheritance by the first Transgression and Rebellion against our heavenly Father, to be thus restor'd by Adoption, and reinstated again into the Privileges of Sons? Why, this was done for us by the Merits and Mediation of Christ: for so saith the Apostle, *If a Son, then an Heir thro Christ*, Gal. 4. 7. And tho no elder Brother is wont to divide the Inheritance with the younger, and make him Co-heir with himself; yet Christ, our elder Brother, hath taken us into Co-partnership with him; and by his Sufferings purchas'd and procur'd Redemption for us, and by that means hath made us *Heirs of Salvation*, and entail'd this Inheritance upon us; Heb. 1. 4. 1 Pet. 1. 4. So that we need not be dismay'd at any Sufferings that may befall us for his sake: for

If so be that we suffer with him, we shall also be glorify'd together. Christ himself was made perfect by Sufferings, and is thereby become our powerful and all-sufficient Saviour; he went to Heaven by the Cross, and we must go the same way to obtain the Crown. The Happiness that he procur'd for us by his Sufferings, we are to be prepar'd for, and possess by our own: *For God hath predestinated us to be conform'd to the Image of his Son, that he may be the*
First-

Epistle for the eighth Sunday after Trinity. 221

First-born among many Brethren; ver. 29. that is, we must first suffer with Christ, and then we shall reign with him.

Thus we see the Sense of all the material Passages of this Day's Epistle; from whence we are instructed in the following Lessons:

1. From our not being Debtors to the Flesh, we are taught to abandon all the sinful Lusts and Desires of it, and that too upon pain of Death and Damnation; for if we live after the Flesh, we shall die. Indeed to satisfy the ordinary and natural Appetites and Cravings of the Flesh, is necessary to preserve our bodily Life; but to gratify the unlawful and irregular Motions of it, will bring upon us Death temporal and eternal: and therefore if we are at any time call'd upon and sollicitated to any Evil by the Importunity of our Lusts, let us not hearken or yield to any such Suggestions of our corrupt Nature, but rather let us turn the deaf Ear, and bid adieu to them. *Mortify therefore your Members which are upon Earth, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, and all inordinate Affection; and learn to possess your Vessels in Sanctification, and Honour, not in the Lust of Concupiscence, as the Gentiles that know not God, but in all Purity and Holiness, as becometh Christians: Col. 3. 5. 1 Theſſ. 4. 4, 5.*

2. Being Debtors to live after the Spirit, let us labour to discharge that Obligation, by giving up our selves to the Guidance and Conduct of God's Holy Spirit, following the Direction of its Light, and the Influence of his Grace in all our ways. *This is to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are call'd, and to walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ: which will stand the Trial of the last Day, and secure to us the Reward of eternal Life; for there is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.*

3. From the great Privilege of Sonship granted to all such, we may learn to behave our selves as the Sons or Children of God. The Duty of Children, we know, is to love their Parents with a hearty and entire Affection: This we are to render in the highest and most superlative degree to our Father in Heaven, *loving him with all our Heart, and with all our Mind, and with all our Strength, and expressing it upon all Occasions. Again, Children owe Honour and Reverence to their Parents: A Son honoureth his Father, saith God; and we have had Fathers in the Flesh, and*

and gave them Reverence, saith the Apostle. This likewise is in the highest measure due to our heavenly Father, which we are therefore daily to pay him in all our Words and Works: *If I then be a Father, where is mine Honour? If a Master, where is my Fear? saith the Lord of Hosts, Mal. i. 6.* both which he justly expects and challenges from us.

Moreover, Children owe Obedience to their Parents; *Children, obey your Parents* (saith the Apostle) *as it is fit in the Lord.* And this Obedience is to be shew'd by observing their Commands, hearkning to their Counsel, and kindly receiving their Admonitions and Corrections; knowing that they proceed from Love, and aim only at their Welfare.

Now this Obedience is most eminently due to our Maker and Father in Heaven: *Hath not the Potter power over the Clay* (saith the Apostle) *which he made and formed?* And hath not God much more the power over his Creatures, the Works of his own Hands? who are therefore infinitely oblig'd to serve and obey him, especially considering that his Commandments are never grievous, and his Corrections are always for our Good.

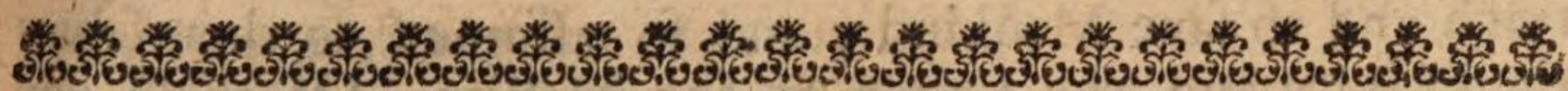
Once more, Children owe a Trust and Confidence in their Parents, and a Dependence upon their Care and Provision for them: And this we are call'd upon to do in a more especial manner as to our heavenly Father; for we are bid to cast all our Care upon him, who careth for us, and to rely upon his Providence at all times without Anxiety and Distrust. This Lesson our Saviour teaches us at large in his Sermon on the Mount, *Mat. 6.* where he useth many Arguments to take us off from all solicitous Care of Food and Raiment, with a Promise, that if we seek first the Kingdom of God and its Righteousness, all the Necessaries of Life shall be added to us.

4. From God's making all his Sons Heirs, we learn the exceeding great Honour and Dignity that Christianity brings its Followers to; it makes them Heirs at present, and will shortly enter them into the possession of a Kingdom, and that not an earthly fading Kingdom, that soon vanishes away, but a Kingdom in Heaven, that can never be mov'd or taken from them. *Now are we the Sons of God* (saith the Apostle) *but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall appear with him in Glory.*

Lastly,

Gospel for the eighth Sunday after Trinity. 223

Lastly, Since Christ obtain'd this Kingdom for us by his Sufferings, let us *not be ashamed of the Cross of Christ*, but, with *St. Paul*, rather glory in, than groan under it; and then we may with him reckon the Sufferings of this present Life not worthy to be nam'd or compar'd with the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us. In short, we see the Duty of our Christian Profession, which is to abstain from all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh, and to follow the Fruits and Dictates of God's Holy Spirit; and likewise the Dignity of our high Calling, to be the Sons and Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Jesus Christ of his Heavenly Kingdom. To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, &c.



DISCOURSE XXVII.

The GOSPEL for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

St. Matthew vii. 15——22.

Beware of false Prophets, which come unto you in Sheeps-Clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves. Ye shall know them by their Fruits: Do Men gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles? Even so every good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit, but a corrupt Tree evil Fruit, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day is another Part or Portion of our Blessed Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, wherein he cautions his Disciples and Followers against false Prophets and Teachers; letting them know the Manner and Ends of their Coming, and giving them some Marks of Distinction to discover and discern them by.

The Collect for the Day prays to be preserv'd from all hurtful things: to which end,

The Epistle directs against all fleshly Lusts, which are hurtful to the Body:

The Gospel against false Prophets and Teachers, which are hurtful to the Soul.

Th

The Caution against these is in these words; *Beware of false Prophets.* Where we are to inquire,

First, Who are here meant by *false Prophets.* And,
Secondly, What is imply'd in bidding us to *beware* of them. For the

First, The false Prophets, against whom this Caution is given, were *false Christs*, *false Apostles*, and *false Teachers*: of all which we read in the Apostles days, and some of which we have the sad experience of in ours.

The *false Christs* were those that pretended to be that great Prophet, which was to come into the World, to teach and to save Mankind; and so assumed to themselves the Dignity and the Office of the Messias. Of these our Saviour himself foretold, *Mat. 24. 5. Many (saith he) shall come in my Name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.* These he after stiles *false Christs and false Prophets*, ver. 24. Of this sort were *Theudas*, *Judas of Galilee*, *Barchocebas*, and others, in the beginning of Christianity; such likewise was *Eldavid* in the sixth Century, who gave out that he was Christ, and drew many after him; and such were *David George*, *Hacket*, and *Naylor* in later days.

The *false Apostles* were those who pretended to be sent by Christ, and boasted of Miracles to confirm their Mission. Of this sort were *Barjesus*, *Elymas the Sorcerer*, and *Simon Magus*, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles; these gave out themselves to be some great Persons, and bewitch'd many with their Sorceries, *Acts 8. 9, 10.* St. Paul stiles them *false Apostles, deceitful Workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ*; and no wonder (saith he) for *Satan himself is transform'd into an Angel of Light.* 2 Cor. 11. 13.

The *false Teachers* were those that own'd the Doctrine of Christ, but corrupted it by Errors, and undermin'd it by Divisions; building Hay and Stubble upon the Foundation of Christianity, and blending the Truth with many impure and corrupt Mixtures. Such were the Gnosticks of old, who pretended to greater Knowledg than others; and such are the Sectaries and Separatists of our days, who by boasting of new Lights and Inspirations seduce and beguile the Hearts of the Simple. These are the false Prophets and Teachers, against whom this Caution is given.

But,

But, *Secondly*, what is imply'd in Christ's bidding his Followers to beware of them? Why, that he himself hath in some measure told us; saying, *Mat. 24. Believe them not, and go not after them*: that is, Be not too forward to receive their Doctrine, nor too easy to be misled by their Example.

Our Saviour had been before speaking of that different Dialect, that would be found among Christians in the latter days; *One saying, Lo! here is Christ; and another, Lo! there*: to which he subjoins this Advice, *Believe them not: For there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very Elect.* And St. John gives the same Advice; *Beloved, believe not every Spirit, for many false Prophets are gone abroad into the World.* Error is sometimes so set off by artificial Colours, that 'tis not easy for weak People to see through the Disguise, or to discern the Face of Truth: some mistake thro Ignorance, and others by Design, speaking things that they should not, for filthy Lucre's sake. False Teachers commonly work upon the Credulity of the Vulgar, and blindly lead them into many Errors; and therefore be not too easy of Belief, nor tamely yield up your Faith to them.

Again, *If any say concerning Christ, Behold he is in the Desert! go not forth: Behold he is in the secret Chambers! believe it not.* In like manner, if any say, Behold he is in the Conclave of Catholicks, or in the Conventicles of Sectaries; *believe them not, and go not after them.* Be not drawn aside from the ways of Truth and Peace by such Calls or Examples. St. Paul bids us, *to mark those that cause Divisions, not to follow, but avoid them.* And from such as have only a Form of Godliness without the Power of it, he warns all good Christians to *turn away*; saying as Jacob did of Simeon and Levi, Brethren in Iniquity, *My Soul come not thou into their Secrets, to their Assemblies mine Honour be not thou united.* In a word, it is much more safe for the common People to give themselves up to the Guidance and Instructions of their lawful and authoriz'd Pastors, than to heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears; who are apt to draw them from the Truth, and to turn them unto Fables. This is imply'd in the Caution here given, *Beware of false Prophets.*

Now to help us herein, our Saviour acquaints us, in the next words, with the Manner and the End of their Coming. The Manner, in these words, *They come to you outwardly in Sheeps-Clothing*; that is, with soft and smooth Pretences: The End, in these, *But inwardly they are ravening Wolves*, who come not but to despoil and to devour. A word or two of each. And,

1st, Of the Manner of their Coming; *They come to you in Sheeps-Clothing*. These Words are an Allusion to the Habit and Custom used by the Prophets of old, who in the Delivery of any weighty Message were wont to wear Sheep-Skins, as a Badg of their Meekness and Innocence: in imitation whereof, the false Prophets would put on their Sheeps-Clothing on the like Occasions, to gain the greater Reverence to their Persons, and the better Reception to their Doctrines. The Sheep, you know, is a Creature noted for its Usefulness and Innocence; it often receives, but never does any harm, and is therefore fitly made the Emblem of Meekness and Patience. So that by Sheeps-Clothing here we are to understand in general all those artificial Methods and Disguises, by which Deceivers seduce the unwary Multitude: St. Paul expresses them by *good Words and fair Speeches*, Rom. 16. and elsewhere by *the Sleight of Men, and the cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*; Eph. 4. 14. But more particularly, this Sheeps-Clothing consists in a great Show of Piety and Zeal for the Glory of God, of great Love and Affection to the Souls of Men, and of great Mortification and Self-denial in themselves. I say,

(1.) It consists in a great Show of Piety and Zeal for the Glory of God. This piece of Sheeps-Clothing was visible in the *Pharisees*, who affected a mighty Appearance of Sanctity and Devotion, and with it cover'd many vile Enormities: *They made long Prayers*, sometimes in the *Corners of the Streets*, and sometimes in private Houses, merely to be heard and *seen of Men*; they kept the Sabbath with a more than ordinary Strictness, and blamed our Saviour and his Disciples for not coming up to their Preciseness. Wherein they are exactly imitated by the modern Zealots and Followers of that separating Sect, who pretend to greater Purity, and cry up a more spiritual way of Worship, merely to hide the Impurity of their Lives, and the Impiety of their Divisions.

(2.) Ano-

(2.) Another piece of this Sheeps-Clothing, is a Pretence of great Love to Mens Souls, and a more than ordinary Care and Tenderneſs for them: This *St. Paul* obſerv'd of the falſe Teachers crept into the Churches of *Galatia*, of whom he minds the *Galatians*; *They zealouſly affect you* (ſaith he) *but not well*: meaning, that whatever Shew of Love and Kindneſs they make to you, there was nothing under it but Falſhood and Hypocriſy; and in all they ſay or do, their Love was not to you, but themſelves. For *they would exclude you* (ſaith he) *that you might affect them*: that is, they would ſhut you out of the true Faith, that you might admire their Perſons, and embrace their Errors. The ſame Cloke is put on and worn ſtill by Seducers, who pretend the greateſt Kindneſs when they intend the greateſt Miſchief, and cover the fouleſt Deſigns under the faireſt Shew of Affection.

(3.) Another piece of this Sheeps-Clothing, is a Pretence to greater Mortification and Self-denial than other Men. So *St. Jerom* interprets the Sheeps-Clothing of falſe Prophets, by their ſeeming Rigour and Aſterity of Life. Indeed, all that will draw Diſciples after them muſt pretend to ſomething extraordinary this way; and this hath been a known Way and Method of Deceivers, to raiſe an Admiration of their Perſons, the better to inſtil their Opinions into them: for a great Appearance of Strictneſs and Sanctity is wont to impoſe upon unwary People, who are apt to think that ſuch godly Men cannot be miſtaken, and thence are eaſily perſuaded to take all they ſay for Goſpel, and ſo implicitly imbibe all their Errors. The *Phariſees* frequent Faſtings and mortify'd Looks drew the People after them, and by theſe Arts falſe Teachers have deceiv'd many: which made *St. Paul* caution the *Coloſſians*, *Let none beguile you with a voluntary Humility, intruding into things which they have not ſeen, being vainly puff'd up with a fleſhly Mind*; Col. 2. This is briefly the Sheeps-Clothing, in which falſe Prophets are ſaid to come.

But what is the End of their Coming? Why, that the next words declare; *Inwardly they are ravening Wolves*. Now the Wolf (you know) is a Creature of Prey, it comes not but to kill and to deſtroy; its chief Deſign is upon the harmleſs Sheep, whom he ſeeks firſt to divide and then to devour. The ravening Wolf is the worſt of its kind, and ſignifies one of the greateſt Rage and Rapacity.

city. And yet our Saviour thought this the fittest Resemblance of the Subtlety and Cruelty of false Teachers, who seek to fleece and devour the Flock they pretend to feed. Of this the *Pharisees* were a plain Instance, who by their long Prayers devour'd Widows Houses, and made their long Robes a Covering for all their Rapine and Oppression; and this hath been the method of their Followers ever since, to carry on Rebellion by Pretences of Reformation, and to hide Sacrilege and Schism under a Cloke of greater Sanctity. And so tho the outward Appearance be in Sheeps-Clothing, yet inwardly they are ravening Wolves.

But how may we know and discover these false Prophets and Teachers? Why, that our Saviour informs us: *Ye shall know them by their Fruits; do Men gather Grapes of Thorns, and Figs of Thistles?* Such sweet and pleasant Fruit cannot spring from a dry and different Stock, no more can sound Practices proceed from rotten and corrupt Principles. The Rule or Mark of Distinction here given by our Saviour, for the discovery of false Teachers, is, *Ye shall know them by their Fruits*: 'tis not by the Leaves or Blossoms of a specious Profession, but by the real Fruits of a suitable Practice.

But what are these Fruits by which we may know them? Why, 'tis by the Fruits of their Doctrine, and the Fruits of their Lives.

1st, I say, false Teachers may be known by the Fruits of their Doctrine; not indeed always by the Matter of their Doctrine, for false Teachers may sometimes preach Doctrines that are sound, orthodox, and true; but by the Ends, Tendencies, and Consequents of them, which are most properly stil'd the Fruits of their Doctrine. Such as prophesy'd falsely in God's Name, and, as some would have them, prophesy'd smooth Things, Deceits, and Lyes, sowing Pillows under mens Arms to hunt Souls; soothing them in their Iniquities, and saying Peace when there was no Peace; were of old stil'd false Prophets, who daub'd with untemper'd Mortar, as we read in *Jeremy* and *Ezekiel*. And such are they who still flatter Men, especially great Persons, in their Vices and Follies, and deal unfaithfully with them committed to their charge, for By-ends.

There are others who perhaps may preach sound Doctrine, but not from good Principles, or for right Ends; viz. not for the Glory of God, or the Good of Mens Souls, but for their own Glory, and to promote some world-

ly Interest. St. Paul speaks of some who preach'd Christ out of Envy and Strife, not of Good-will, but of Contention, and therefore *not sincerely*; Phil. i. 15, 16. And we have some who vent Doctrines tending to the Breach of Peace and Unity in the Church of Christ, and to promote Sedition, Faction, and Disobedience in it: such as these are justly reckon'd in the number of false Teachers, who serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Bellies. St. James speaks of a sort of Wisdom, that is attended with bitter Envy, Strife, and Dissension, which leads to Confusion and every evil Work: and this Wisdom, he tells us, descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. But the Wisdom that is from above, is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality and without Hypocrisy. By these Marks we may try the Fruits of Mens Doctrine, and thereby know the false Teachers from the true.

2dly, We may know them by the Fruits of their Lives; for wicked Practices flow from evil Principles, and plainly demonstrate the Falshood of them. As false Premises always infer a false Conclusion, so a bad Life discovers the Naughtiness of the Heart, and the Unsoundness of the Profession. 'Tis true indeed, a wicked Life doth not always denominate a Man a false Teacher, for a bad Liver may sometimes preach true Doctrine: in which case our Saviour's Direction is, *to do as they say, and not as they do; for they say and do not.*

But for the most part Mens Practices are sutable to their Principles, and the Debauchery of Manners proceeds from the Debauchery of the Mind: tho this, as all other Rules, may admit of some Exception.

Again, It must be granted, that some Men may so artificially colour over and disguise their evil Deeds and Designs, that 'tis not easy to discover the Badness of them: but yet here too the Disguise often drops off, and the Wolf appears under the Sheeps-Clothing; the Cloke in time wears out, and the Hypocrisy may be seen through the Thinness of the Covering. But where Mens Wickedness is more open and scandalous, where their Lives are vicious or factious, where they manifestly sow the Seeds of Discord and Dissension, fomenting Division and Separation, and thereby kindling mutual Heats and Hatred against one another; there we may safely conclude them to be none of Christ's Husbandmen, to sow his good Seed, but some of

Satan's Emissaries and Instruments to plant his Tares.

Again, Where Men persuade to do Evil that Good may come, casting off known Duties, and allowing themselves in apparent Violations both of Divine and Human Laws; these are all evil Fruits, and they whose Doctrines or Practices lead to the Growth of them, are some of the false Prophets or Teachers, that we are here exhorted to beware of and to avoid.

But our Saviour goes on to illustrate these things by the Similitude of a Tree and its Fruit: for having before intimated, that *Men do not gather Grapes of Thorns*, but of the Vine; *nor Figs of Thistles*, but of the Fig-tree; he adds, *Even so every good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit, but a corrupt Tree bringeth forth evil Fruit*: meaning, that the Fruit partakes of the Nature and Goodness of the Tree from whence it proceeds; so that if the Tree be good, the Fruit will be good also; but if the Tree be evil or corrupt, the Fruit will be so too. Even so good Principles, if firmly rooted in the Mind, will bring forth the good Fruits of sound Doctrine and a suitable Practice; but evil Principles, if got there, will produce the bad Fruits of Error and unsound Practices. St. James explains it by the Similitude of a Spring or Fountain; where if the Waters are pure and clean, it will send forth clear and wholesom Streams; but if the Waters be foul and polluted, the Streams that issue from it must be so too, for a Fountain cannot at the same place send forth sweet Waters and bitter, James 3. 11. In like manner, a good Man out of the good Treasure of the Heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil Man out of the evil Treasure of his Heart bringeth forth evil things; for out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh: Luke 6. 45. So that as a Tree is known by its Fruit, so is the Man by his Manners: which is so true, that our Saviour adds, *A good Tree cannot bring forth evil Fruit, neither can a corrupt Tree bring forth good Fruit*. But here we must note, that what is here said of the Tree and its Fruit, must not be apply'd always to Persons, but mostly to Principles: for if we apply it to Persons, it will sometimes prove otherwise; for the best of Men having something of Evil in them, sometimes bring forth evil Fruit; and the worst of Men having something of Good in them, sometimes bring forth good Fruit: This is so evident from the Failings of good Men, and the good Works of bad Men, that it needs no farther Proof. But if we apply it to Principles, it will
ever

Gospel for the eighth Sunday after Trinity. 231

ever hold true ; for we may say of evil and corrupt Practices, that they always come of evil Principles ; and of good and sound Doctrines, that they always come from good Principles : no Opinion truly good can promote any moral Evil, and no Opinion truly evil can advance any moral Good. In this case it hath been rightly observ'd, that the Tree that is once corrupt will always be so, and nothing but Corruption can come from it ; and the Doctrine that is once good will still continue such, and never degenerate into Evil. In a word, all that is good cometh from God, the Author and Fountain of all Good ; and all that is evil cometh of the Devil, who is the Father and Fountain of all Evil. So that by the Goodness or Badness of the Fruit, we may be able to judg both of Teachers and their Doctrines, whether they come from God, or proceed from the Evil one.

And this we are the more narrowly to search and look into, because our Saviour tells us in the next words, that *every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire* : that is, every one's Principles and Practices shall shortly undergo a Trial ; they who have built upon the Foundation of Christianity, sound Doctrines, and the Fruits of a holy Life, which the Apostle compares to *Silver and Gold, and precious Stones* ; all such shall receive a Reward : but they who build upon it *the Hay and Stubble* of Errors and Divisions, and other corrupt Fruit, shall suffer Loss, and both they and their Works shall be cast into the fire.

Wherefore by their Fruits ye shall know them, saith our blessed Saviour : that is, by the Fruits of their Doctrines and their Lives. This is the Test or Touchstone here given us to try false Teachers by ; 'tis not by their Words or specious Pretences : for *not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord ! shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; but he that doth the Will of my Father, who is in Heaven*. Where by saying *Lord, Lord !* is meant the making an outward or open Profession of Christ, either by being call'd by his Name, as in Baptism, wherein we own him for our Lord and Master ; or by calling upon his Name, as in our Prayers, wherein we say, *Lord, Lord !* in token of our Subjection to and Dependence upon him. Now this outward Profession, or saying *Lord, Lord !* is not of it self sufficient to bring us to Heaven ; for this may come only from the Tongue or the Teeth outward, without the real

Service and Subjection of the Heart: and therefore our Saviour adds, that 'tis the doing the Will of our Father in Heaven, that can alone bring us there. 'Tis a sincere, entire, and universal Obedience to God's Laws, that only intitles to the Kingdom of Heaven, without which neither Pastor nor People by any other Methods or Pretences shall ever arrive thither.

Thus we see who are the false Prophets or Teachers we are bid to beware of, what is the Manner and End of their coming, together with the Marks and Tokens to discover or discern them by.

It remains only to exhort you to use your greatest Caution and Circumspection in this weighty Affair. Both Christ and his Apostles tell us, that many false Prophets are gone out into the World, and that they use all possible Arts and Devices to impose upon and deceive the People: 'tis therefore seasonable Advice, to watch and guard yourselves against their Delusions. Remember that 'tis both easy and dangerous to be deceiv'd by them; the Sheeps-Clothing they put on makes it easy, and the ravening Wolf that lies under it makes it dangerous. The Sheep, you know, may be easily betray'd, if the Wolf come in the habit and disguise of a Sheep: and 'tis no hard matter for the unthinking Vulgar to be impos'd upon, when the Seducer comes in the Appearance of a Saint. A plausible Show of Zeal, a loud Cry of Reformation, of greater Purity of Worship, of better Means of Edification, and the like, have cheated many into Schism and Sedition. When these Impostors have insinuated themselves into the Esteem and Affections of the People, and brought them to a fond Admiration of their Persons, they then lead them where they please, by an implicit Faith and blind Obedience; and the People become ready to receive and swallow whatever they prepare for them.

And as the Deceit is easy, so is it exceeding dangerous; for false Teachers are said in Scripture to have the Windings and Doublings of the Serpent, the Subtlety of the Fox, and the Rapacity of the Wolf, from all which there cannot but be great danger to the Flock of Christ: which should make them take heed of wandring from the Fold, but keep together, as Sheep are wont to do, when any Danger seems to threaten or annoy them.

Lastly,

Lastly, From the Rule here given to know false Teachers by their Fruits, let us learn to bring their Doctrines and Practices to this Test, and see whether they tend to promote the Fruits of the Spirit, which are Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Meekness, Patience, and the like; or whether they lead to the Works of the Flesh, which are Wrath, Strife, Hatred, Variance, Heresies and Divisions; and accordingly receive or reject them: so shall we avoid the Ways of Error and Dissension, and be kept in the Paths of Peace and Truth, which lead to eternal Life; to which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the Merits of Jesus Christ.



DISCOURSE XXVIII.

The EPISTLE for the Ninth Sunday after
Trinity.

I Cor. x. 1 — 14.

Brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our Fathers were under the Cloud, and all passed through the Sea, and were all baptized unto Moses, in the Cloud and in the Sea, and did all eat the same spiritual Meat, and did all drink the same spiritual Drink, &c. But with many of them God was not well pleased, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches God to grant to us the Spirit, to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we who cannot do any thing that is good without him, may by him be enabled to live according to his Will. Accordingly,

The Epistle for the Day teaches us to think aright concerning the Church, both under the Law and under the Gospel; and likewise to do aright by the Directions of it under both Dispensations. And because of our selves we can neither think or do as God would have us, we are to
implore

implore the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, to enable us to please him in both. Lest Christians now should boast of higher and greater Privileges than the Jews had of old, and so be exalted above measure by the Abundance of the Gospel-Revelations; the Apostle tells them, that the *Israelites* of old were the People of God as well as we, and had the like Favours and miraculous Works vouchsafed to them under the Law, as are now afforded to us under the Gospel: and as they were punish'd for their Ingratitude and Abuse of God's Mercies, so we may not hope to go unpunish'd, if we run into the like Enormities.

This is the Drift of this Day's Epistle, where the Apostle, in the first Verse, *would not have us ignorant, how that all our Fathers were under the Cloud, and all passed through the Sea.* By *our Fathers* here are meant the antient *Israelites*, to whom we succeed in the Covenant made with them, and in the Title of his Church. By these Fathers being *under the Cloud*, is meant their being under the particular Care and Conduct of the Divine Providence; that they had the Favour of a Cloud to overshadow them, to keep them from the Scorchings of the Sun, and the Injuries of the Weather. The Expression refers to what is said of the *Israelites* in their Passage thro the Wilderness, *viz.* that *God went before them by day in a Pillar of a Cloud to lead them the way, and by night in a Pillar of Fire, to give them Light to go by day and night*; *Exod. 13. 21.* And the same is affirm'd by the Psalmist, *Psal. 78. 14.* Where by the Pillar of a Cloud and of Fire, we are not to understand any solid Body of a Pillar moving and leading the way before them, but of a hollow and luminous Body shining and hovering over their Heads like a Dove, at once directing and overshadowing of them: to which the Psalmist refers, saying, *Under the shadow of thy Wings will I rejoice, and thou shalt hide me under the shadow of thy Wings.* So that the Expression here signifies God Almighty's great Care in protecting and preserving the *Israelites* from all Dangers.

This the Apostle would have these *Corinthians* and all Christians to know concerning them; and likewise that they *all passed thro the Sea*, meaning, that they went safe through the Red Sea, the Waters standing like a Wall on each side to give them a secure Passage; which *Pharaoh* and his Host, who were then pursuing them, attempting to do, were overwhelm'd and drown'd in the Waters.

This

This the Apostle stiles a sort of baptizing of them into the Belief of *Moses's* Doctrine, in the next words; *And were all baptized unto Moses in the Cloud and in the Sea*: meaning, that that Cloud and that Passage thro the Red Sea, which were used as a means to confirm the Ministry of *Moses*, was a Type of Baptism; signifying, that as the *Israelites* of old being saved from and by Water, were converted to the Belief of the Doctrine deliver'd by *Moses*, so we being born again of Water and the Holy Ghost, are thereby initiated and confirm'd in the Doctrine deliver'd by Christ. To which 'tis added, in the next Verse, that *they did all eat the same spiritual Meat*: meaning, that the Manna which fell down from Heaven, and was fed upon by the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, was a Type of the holy Sacrament instituted by Christ in the Gospel; and their feeding on the former convey'd to them the same spiritual and heavenly Nourishment, that we now receive by the latter: for which reason they are here said to *eat the same spiritual Meat*.

And as the next words tell us, *They did all drink of the same spiritual Drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that follow'd them, and that Rock was Christ*: that is, as the Manna that was rain'd down on the *Israelites* in the Wilderness afforded them spiritual Meat, representing the spiritual Food we receive in the Lord's Supper; so the Water that issu'd out of the Rock upon *Moses's* smiting of it, of which we read, *Exod. 17. 6.* afforded them spiritual Drink; typifying the Blood of Christ, which we drink in the Holy Sacrament. And *this Rock* is here said to *follow them*; which cannot be meant of the Rock it self, which was a fix'd unmovable Body, but of the Water that flow'd out of the Rock, and follow'd the *Israelites* many Years in their Journeying in the Wilderness: for in all their Change of Stations for almost thirty eight Years, we never read of any want of Water, tho they travel'd all that while in a dry unwater'd Wilderness; of which no other reason can be given, but that the Water of the Rock like a River ran after them, and (as 'tis here affirm'd) follow'd them. And that this Water was spiritual or sacramental Drink, appears by the next words; *And this Rock was Christ*: not materially, but spiritually; for as the Sign is often put for the thing signify'd by it, so the Rock here is call'd Christ, who is meant and signify'd by it. The Resemblance whereof lies chiefly in these two things:

236 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

1st, As the Rock yielded no Water before it was smitten with the Rod of *Moses*, so was Christ smitten upon the Cross, and *his Side pierc'd with a Spear*, before there issued from him that sovereign Stream of *Water and Blood*, of which *he who drinketh shall never thirst more*. Again,

2dly, As this Rock yielded Water not only at the Place where it was broach'd, but follow'd the *Israelites* in all their Stations in the Wilderness; so that Water which gush'd from our Saviour's Side, serv'd not only those that were present at his Sufferings, but hath follow'd Christians from the Day of his Passion to this Hour.

But how are the *Israelites* said to *eat the same spiritual Meat*, and to *drink the same spiritual Drink with us*? Why, 'tis the same, tho not in Sign, yet in Substance and Signification unto both: for they are Seals of the same Covenant, they represent the same Sacraments, and convey the same Promises, Blessings, and Graces to both.

So far the Apostle sets forth the many and great Privileges, which the People of the *Jews* enjoy'd in common with us. They had the same Sacraments, tho represented by different Signs and Symbols; by their Manna in the Wilderness, and the Paschal Lamb in the Passover: They did eat the same spiritual Meat with us; and by the Water flowing out of the Rock, they drank the same spiritual Drink with us in the Holy Communion. And by both they had the same Graces and Favours vouchsaf'd to them, tho couch'd and shadow'd out to them in temporal Blessings and Promises. And this is what the Apostle would have us know, or not be ignorant of, lest we should think too highly of our selves, or too meanly of them.

But how did these *Israelites* use these signal Favours and Blessings? And what follow'd thereupon? Why, that the next words tell us: *With many of them God was not well-pleas'd; for they were overthrown in the Wilderness*. By which it appears, that many of them made a very bad Use of those great Blessings, and abus'd the Mercies of God to very evil Purposes; as we shall see after. The sad Condition of those Persons is here set forth by two Expressions;

(1.) That *God was not well-pleas'd with them*. And,

(2.) That *they were overthrown in the Wilderness*. Both which shew us the wretched and lost Condition of all unworthy Receivers of these Holy Mysteries.

(1.) The Misery of their Condition is here set forth by God's not being *well-pleas'd with them*; which Phrase implies

implies more than it seems to express: for it signifies not only God's not being well pleas'd, but his being highly displeas'd with them, that he was much incens'd, and that his Wrath was hot against them. Indeed it is the greatest Degree and Measure of Unhappiness, to be out of the Favour of God, and to be one of those, with whom God is not well pleas'd; for then nothing we say or do is acceptable, but an Abomination to him. When God the Father declar'd his great Love and Favour for his beloved Son, he express'd it thus, that in him *he was well pleas'd*; Mat. 3. 17. signifying thereby the highest Happiness. And when he here declared his just Indignation against these ungrateful *Israelites*, he thus expresses it, that with them he was not *well-pleas'd*; which denotes the Height of Misery. And this is farther confirm'd to us,

(2.) By the Punishment that befel them, for *they were overthrown in the Wilderness*: that is, by the just Judgment of God for the gross Abuse of his Mercies, their Carcases drop'd in their Passage through the Wilderness, and two only, *viz. Caleb and Joshua*, surviv'd to reach the promis'd Land of *Canaan*. Now *Canaan* was the Type of Heaven; the Wilderness signified the Passage through this wild and barren World; to fall in the Wilderness, was to come short of the heavenly *Canaan*; and the Persons that did so were those, to whom God sware in his Wrath, that they should not enter into his Rest. So that the Sense of it is, that they who did not use aright the Pledges and Privileges bestow'd on them, were depriv'd of eternal Life. Thus we see how the unworthy Receivers of that spiritual Meat and Drink in the Wilderness were punish'd with temporal Death in this World, and with eternal Death and Damnation in the next.

Now these things (saith the Apostle in the next words) *are our Examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted*: That is, they are lively Representations and Lessons of Instruction, to teach us to keep our selves pure from their Vices, to glorify God for his Mercies, and not to gratify our Lusts as they did; and to learn by their Punishment to fear the Judgments of God falling upon us, if we follow and transgress after their Example. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime* (saith St. Paul in another place) *were written for our Learning*; to teach us to avoid those Rocks against which others have split, and to obtain that Blessedness, which their Ingratitude

gratitude depriv'd them of. To which end, the Apostle warns us, in the following Verses, against many of their Sins, that unhappily occasion'd their Destruction : As,

1st, He cautions against Idolatry, ver. 7. *Neither be ye Idolaters, as were some of them ; as it is written, The People sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.* Idolatry of all kinds is a Sin highly displeasing and hateful unto God ; being a total falling away from him, and a preferring other things in our Love and Choice before him ; 'tis a robbing God of his Honour, of which he is infinitely tender ; and the giving his Glory to another, which cannot but highly provoke him : especially considering, that he hath declar'd himself a jealous God, and hath threatned to visit this Iniquity upon the Persons and Posterity of those that commit it. And yet the *Israelites* often fell into this heinous and provoking Sin : an Instance whereof we have here in the molten Calf, whom they worship'd with Luxury and Riot, with licentious Feasts, and leud Plays ; *Sitting down to eat and drink, and rising up to play ;* as we read, *Exod. 32. 4, 6, 8.*

2^{dly}, He cautions against Fornication, ver. 8. *Neither let us commit Fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one Day three and twenty thousand.* This was another Sin of the *Israelites*, of which we read, *Numb. 25. 1.* where the People of Israel in their Abode at Shittim, are said to commit Whoredom with the Daughters of Moab ; for which, as also for their joining in the Idol-Sacrifices, God sent a Plague among them, that destroy'd in one day Three and Twenty Thousand of them. So far is Fornication from being (as some would have it) a Venial Sin, that needs no great Regard or Repentance, that it drew down the sorest and severest Judgments upon the Committers of it ; and instead of a Pardon, brought a deadly and wasting Plague upon them : which should teach us to beware of defiling our Bodies, which are to be consecrated as Temples to the Holy Ghost ; and not to make the Members of Christ to become the Members of a Harlot.

3^{dly}, The Apostle, from their Example, cautions against tempting of God, ver. 9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of Serpents.* Of this Sin of the *Israelites* we read, *Numb. 21. 5, 6.* where they are said to tempt God by loathing the Manna that he sent them, and asking Meat for their Lusts : for which reason, the Lord sent fiery Serpents among them, and they bit the People,

People, and much People of Israel died; ver. 6. From whence we may learn to beware of being weary of the Gospel, and of loathing the spiritual Food recommended in it, lest God let loose Satan, that old Serpent, upon us, first to sting, and then to destroy us.

4thly, Here is a Caution against Murmuring, ver. 10. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer. This Sin of Murmuring was the great and famous Sin of the Israelites, who were apt to murmur and complain against God upon all Occasions, even when he had done the greatest things for them. The Place here chiefly refer'd to, is Numb. 14. 2, 3. where we read, that all the Children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron; and the whole Congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the Land of Egypt, or would God we had died in this Wilderness: Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this Land to fall by the Sword, that our Wives and Children should be made a Prey? &c. Where they unthankfully twit and upbraid their Maker with all the Mercies he had bestow'd upon them; which provoked God to send a Plague among them, and to sweep them all away by his destroying Angel. Ver. 36, 27. & Chap. 16. 41, &c.

Now all these things (saith our Apostle) happened unto them for Ensamples, and they are written for our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come: that is, all the Sins and Judgments on these Israelites, who receiv'd such wonderful Mercies at God's hands, and yet sin'd so foully, and were destroy'd so miserably, are so many Warnings to us Christians to beware of their Sins, lest we feel and fall by the same Punishments. And these things are recorded and deriv'd down to us in the last Age of the World, on purpose that we should amend and take warning thereby. From all which the Apostle, in the next Verse, infers,

5thly, A Caution against Presumption; Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall: that is, since these Israelites, who had such great Advantages of standing, having the same spiritual Meat, and the same spiritual Drink with us, and from thence might be suppos'd to receive spiritual Strength enough to withstand all Temptations; if they yet fell so foully into so great Evils both of Sin and Punishment, let none of us presume upon our Strength, but let us all look warily to our Steps, lest we fall into the like Enormities. We are apt indeed to think too well of our selves,

elves, and to say with *David*, *Our Mountain stands so strong that it cannot be moved*; and yet, if left to our selves, may with him soon fall into great Sin and Misery. *Peter* was so confident of the Strength of his Faith, and his standing firm to his Saviour, that he boldly declar'd, *If all the World should deny him, yet would not he deny him*; and yet soon after he deny'd him shamefully, and that not once only, but thrice with many bitter Oaths and Imprecations: Which may teach us not to presume too much upon our standing, but to pray that *our Faith fail not*, and that *we fall not into Temptation*.

And lest any should despond under the Greatness of his Trials, or his own Weakness to undergo them, the Apostle adds these comfortable Words in the Close, saying,

There hath no Temptation taken you, but such as is common to Man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it: Where we have two strong Motives to Patience and Consolation under all the Trials and Hardships that may befall us. The

First is taken from the Commonness of them; *There hath no Temptation taken you, but such as is common to Man*. No reasonable Man can grudge to bear a share in the common Lot of Mankind, or hope that God should alter the Course of his Providence only for his sake: and since God is pleas'd, for wise Reasons, to exercise even the best Men with Trials and Afflictions, it must be very unreasonable to refuse to taste of that bitter Cup, of which others drink before and with us. The

Second is taken from the Security here given of sufficient Strength to bear them, and of a happy Issue and Deliverance from them; both which are grounded upon the Fidelity of our Maker: for *God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tried above what we are able, but will with the Temptation make a way to escape*; which is abundantly enough to relieve and support us under them.

This is the Substance of this Day's Epistle; which will afford us many observable things, which I shall only mention. As,

1. From the *Israelites* eating the same spiritual Meat, and drinking the same spiritual Drink with us, we may learn that they had the same Covenant of Grace that we now have,

Epistle for the ninth Sunday after Trinity. 241

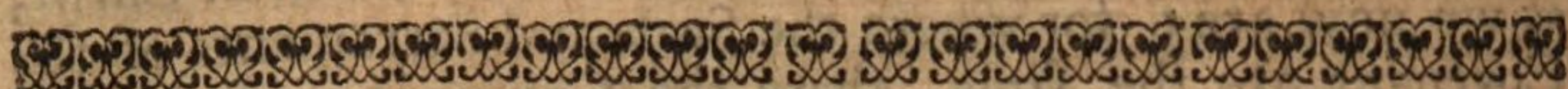
have, and were sav'd the same way, even by Faith in Christ, as we now are: for where the Seals and Sacraments of the Covenant are the same, there the Covenant must be the same also.

2. From the many Plagues and Punishments that beset the *Israelites* for their Ingratitude and Breach of this Covenant, we may learn to fear and expect the same upon the like Disobedience: for if every Transgression and Disobedience of Moses's Law receiv'd a just Recompence of Reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation? Heb. 2. 2, 3.

3. From the Caution here given against Presumption, let us learn to suspect our selves, and not be too confident of our standing, but look narrowly to our Ways, to prevent our falling; taking the Apostle's Advice, to walk circumspectly, not as Fools, &c. but as Wise.

Lastly, From God's finding a way to deliver us under the greatest Trials, let us learn at all times to put our Trust in him, and in the Use of good Means to rely upon his Providence; so shall we be secure in all Dangers, and safe from all our Enemies: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XXIX.

The GOSPEL for the Ninth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Luke xvi. 1—10.

Jesus said unto his Disciples, There was a certain rich Man, who had a Steward, and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his Goods; and he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer Steward. Then the Steward said within himself, &c.

IN this Gospel for the Day we are presented with the Parable of the Master and the unjust Steward; in which are figuratively represented to us,

1st, The great Bounty and Goodness of God in dispensing his Blessings.

2^{dly}, The great Injustice and Unfaithfulness of Men in wasting and abusing of them.

3^{dly}, The great Danger and Difficulties that ensue upon so doing. And,

4^{thly}, The best Means to prevent these Evils, and to turn the good things to a better account. These things are contain'd in this Parable, and comprize the whole of this Day's Gospel. The Parable was deliver'd by Jesus unto his Disciples, and begins thus:

There was a certain rich Man who had a Steward. Where, by the certain rich Man, we are to understand God Almighty, the great Landlord and Proprietor of the World; whose is the Earth, and the Fulness thereof. By the Steward is meant all Mankind, with whom he hath intrusted his Goods and Talents; for the Earth he hath given to the Children of Men, with all the Fruits and Product thereof, to some more, and to some less, but to all some, expecting an Account and Improvement from them all according to their

their proportion; for he hath not made them Owners or Proprietors, but only Stewards and Dispensers of his Blessings, to be dispos'd of according to his Will and Direction. Which shews us from whence all our Gifts come, namely, from God the great Lord and Donor of all things; for *every good Gift, and every perfect Gift (saith St. James) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights: Jam. i. 17.* And likewise the Ends for which they are given, to wit, for the Honour of our Master, and the Benefit of our selves and one another. Now 'tis required of Stewards (saith the Apostle) *that they be found faithful,* in managing aright what is committed to them.

But the Steward here in the Parable was found unfaithful; for *he was accused to his Lord, that he had wasted his Goods:* instead of employing them to his Master's Use, he had mispent them in Riot and Prodigality, and so wrong'd his Master without any Benefit to himself; as Prodigals are wont to do other Men harm, and themselves no good. This improvident and unfaithful Behaviour coming to his Master's Knowledg, as Unthrif and Prodigality seldom escape Discovery, the Master call'd him to him, and said, *How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer Steward.* Every Master may, and much more our great Master in Heaven, call his Servants and Stewards to an account for embezzling his Goods, and discharge them too of their Office for the unfaithful Discharge of it: so he did with this unjust Steward, and so he will do with all wicked and unprofitable Servants; which should teach us Fidelity in the Trust committed to us, and in any Place or Office whereunto we are call'd, lest we be brought to a Reckoning, and with Shame and Misery be discarded from it.

But what did this unjust Steward when he was turn'd out of Service? Why, *He said within himself, What shall I do; for my Lord taketh from me the Stewardship, I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed?* Sin and Wickedness deprive Men of God's Blessing; it puts them out of his Favour and Protection, and leads them into many Straits and Difficulties. This wicked Servant liv'd in Ease and Plenty in his Master's Service, he wanted nothing but Grace to make a better use of what he vainly squander'd away; and now he liv'd to want that which he so wantonly wasted: having made no provision for this sad time, he was at his wits end what to do for a Livelihood; to dig for it by his Labour,

he could not, and to beg for it by way of Alms he was ashamed. However, something must be done, and that speedily too, or starve: casting then awhile about him, *I am resolved* (saith he) *what to do, that when I am put out of the Stewardship, they may receive me into their Houses:* And what was that? Why, it was to ingratiate himself with his Lord's Tenants and Debtors, and to make such Abatements in their Accounts, as might oblige them to be kind to him in distress, and to harbour him upon occasion. This Project we have in the fifth, sixth and seventh Verses; where we read, that before he gave up his Accounts, *He called every one of his Lord's Debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my Lord? He said, An hundred Measures of Oil: Then said he unto him, Take thy Bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.* Where he struck off half the Sum, bidding him write it down quickly upon his Bill, that their Books may agree, and so avoid all Suspicion of Mistake or Misreckoning. *Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred Measures of Wheat: He said unto him, Take thy Bill, and write Four-score.* Where he struck off twenty Measures of Wheat, every Measure containing a great Quantity, and being the same with the *Hebrew Omer*, amounted to a great Sum; him too he commanded to write down in the Foot of the Bill, that there might be no difference in the Account, and so no Discovery. The like he did with all the rest, making favourable Entries into all their Books of Account, in hopes that having gratify'd so many Persons by such large Abatements, they would remember him in time of need; and that some of them at least (tho others should prove ungrateful) would stand by him, and make some amends for his Kindness.

But how did the Master take all this? Why, the next words tell us, that *the Lord commended the unjust Steward, because he had done wisely; for the Children of this World are wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light:* Not that he lik'd his Dishonesty or Unfaithfulness, for he gives him the Character of an *unjust Steward*; but he commended his Wit in contriving a way how to help himself when he was out of Service, and providing against a time of need. And indeed this was the main Design of the Parable, to teach Men to lay up for themselves a good Foundation, and to have a provident Care for the time to come: The Master seems to take little or no notice of the way or manner
of

of his providing for himself, much less is there here any Approbation of or Encouragement to the fraudulent or false Dealings used by him for that purpose. This was beside the Design and Intention of our Lord in this Parable, and is therefore pass'd over in silence; and no Argument is to be taken from any incidental Circumstance, but only from the main Scope, End, and Intention of a Parable. That which the Master here commends, is not the Injustice, but the Wit and Forecast of this unjust Steward, his dextrous projecting a way for his future Subsistence, and laying a Scheme to help himself in time of Necessity; this is that wherein he is said to *have done wisely*: it being much wiser to apply the Mind to the finding out a way of living, than to starve and pine away through Negligence and Inconsideration.

The Master's commending this Steward's Wisdom, was in some measure to recommend his Example to us, not indeed as to the same Way or Manner, but to the same Care and Diligence in making a prudent Provision for our selves, as he did; and in the like, tho not in the same way. So that two things are here recommended to our Imitation; the one relating to the End, the other to the Means.

The 1st is, that as this Steward was careful for his Body, to provide a Maintenance for the preserving his natural Life; so should we be as careful for our Soul, to seek out such spiritual Food, as may preserve and cherish it to Life everlasting. And,

2^{dly}, As this Steward provided for himself out of his Master's Goods, by disposing them into other hands, from whence he might have some Return; so should we lay up a Portion for our selves out of the Goods intrusted us by our Master in Heaven, transferring them into those hands, from whom we may receive them with advantage. Which we should the rather do, because he traded only in earthly, temporal, and perishing Goods; whereas we deal in heavenly, spiritual, and more enduring Substance.

In short then, the Master's commending the Wisdom and Providence of this unjust Steward, teaches us to take the same or greater care for our Souls, than worldly Men do for their Bodies; and to be as wise and diligent in providing for Eternity, as they are for a little time here in this World. The general Neglect whereof made him add, that *the Children of this World are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light.* Where,

By the Children of this World are meant such as addict themselves to this World, and are immers'd in the Cares and Affairs of it, whose Affections are wholly bent upon the World, whose Conversation is conform'd to the Course and Practices of the World, and whose main Aim and Happiness is plac'd in the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of this World; who are generally call'd and known by the name of Worldlings.

By the Children of Light are meant the *Children of God*, who is stil'd *the Father of Lights*; the Followers of Christ, who is call'd the Light of the World; the Members of his Church, who being enlighten'd with the Knowledg of Divine Things, and aiming at the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, are stil'd the Children of Light. In short, our Saviour mentioning two Masters, God and Mammon, to one or other of which all Mankind belong; the Servants of Mammon are the Children of this World, and the Servants of God the Children of Light.

Now our Saviour here in this Parable making a comparison between these two in point of Wisdom, gives it clearly on the Worldlings side, saying, *The Children of this World are wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light*. Not that they are absolutely and in all things so; for the Scripture makes the Fear of God the greatest Wisdom, and *Solomon* the wisest of Men stiles all wicked and worldly Men Fools: but they are *wiser in their Generation*, that is, as to the things of this Life; they shew more Wisdom in managing the temporal Concerns of this World, than many who profess themselves Christians do in greater and more heavenly Matters. The Sense and Reason whereof is, that they act more prudentially and more suitably to the End they propose to themselves, than the other do in theirs. The Worldling's End is the Happiness of this World, consisting in the Enjoyment of earthly Goods; the Christian's End is the Happiness of Heaven, consisting in the Fruition of future and eternal Blessedness. Now if we consider the Ways and Means that these two use for the attaining their several Ends; we shall find the one acting more agreeably and wisely for the compassing his End, than the other; that is, the Children of this World shew more Prudence in the managery of their temporal Affairs to the best advantage for the good of their Bodies, than many Christians do in the spiritual Concerns of their Souls, and the Pursuit of everlasting Salvation. This is so manifest in Experience,

as

as to need no other proof. For do not many Men take far more pains in the Service of Mammon, than others do in the Service of God? How sagacious and subtle are they in seeking and finding out a good Bargain, and how diligent and solicitous in the pursuit of it; and at the same time very cold and careless in matters of far greater moment? How quick-scented are they in smelling out Gain at a great distance, as a Vultur does the Carcase, when they have no Scent or Relish at all of spiritual good things? How cheerful and constant are they in keeping the Market, when they can scarce move over the Threshold to go to Church?

But to keep to the Instance here in the Parable: how provident and forecasting was this unjust Steward, to take care for his future Subsistence, when he found his Office dropping from him, and his Service like to fail? How careful was he for a moment, and how neglectful are others of Eternity? And when he spar'd no Pains, nor stuck at any means to compass a small and short Maintenance here in this World, are not too many, who would be thought better and wiser, unmindful of making any Provision for a future and eternal State? Must not his provident Care and Diligence shame and reproach all such Remissness and Negligence, and plainly shew that *the Children of this World*, or the Sons of Darkness, are, in their Generation, wiser than such who would be accounted *Children of Light*? Now from this Parable we are taught to be as wise for the next World, as worldly Men are for this; and to be as careful for the Welfare of our Souls, as they are of their Bodies; that as they rise early and sit up late, and eat the Bread of Carefulness, so we should be at the same or like pains to work out our own Salvation. *Solomon* sends the Sluggard to the Ant, the Bee, and the Pismire, to learn Industry, and a provident Care for the time to come; and a greater than *Solomon* sends us here to the unjust Steward, to learn the Wisdom of so managing our present perishing Possessions, as to secure to us an eternal Subsistence, when that Trust shall be at an end: That as he made Friends enough by his Master's Goods, to take him into their Houses in time of Extremity, so we may make to our selves Friends out of the Substance intrusted with us, to be receiv'd into everlasting Habitations. So our Saviour infers from this Parable, *I say unto you, make to your selves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations:*

where the Wealth and Riches of this World are call'd by an untoward Name, *The Mammon of Unrighteousness*; and that justly too, because they are many times unrighteously gotten, unjustly possess'd, unfaithfully us'd, and ungodlily spent.

By *making Friends of this Mammon of Unrighteousness*, is so to dispose of our Wealth or worldly Substance, as may turn to the best Account here, and befriend us in the World to come.

By *receiving us into everlasting Habitations*, is, after this short Life is ended, to be admitted into Heaven, and there seated for ever in the Celestial Mansions. The Sense then of these words is, that as this Steward in the Parable so manag'd Matters by his Master's Substance, that when he was dismiss'd of the Stewardship, he had thereby made Friends enough to take him into their Houses; so should we order and dispose of our worldly Goods in such a manner, that when we fail, we may have Interest enough by them to be receiv'd into Heaven. Here then is suppos'd,

1. That we all must and shall surely fail.
2. That there are everlasting Habitations prepar'd and reserv'd for us against that time.
3. That our well-using and dispensing of this World's Goods, will intitle us to, and instate us in those heavenly Habitations.

1. There is not a more known and certain Truth, than that we all must and shall surely fail; *The Living know that they shall surely die*, saith Solomon. Our Abode here is both short and uncertain, no Man's Riches can bribe Death, or secure him from the Grave; yea, they rather sink Men the sooner into it, than save them from it. David said in his Prosperity, *that his Mountain was made so strong, that he could never fail*; God did but hide his Face from him, and his Spirits presently fail'd, and sunk him into great Sorrow and Trouble. The rich Man in the Gospel thought, that neither he or his Substance should ever fail, and therefore sung a *Requiem* to his Soul, *Soul, take thine Ease, thou hast Goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry*: but he too fail'd before the next morning, for that very night his Soul was requir'd of him. Fail then we all must, and a time is coming when we must bid adieu to this World, and all things in it, imply'd in those words, *When ye fail*.

2. Here are suppos'd future and everlasting Habitations, when all these things fail and forsake us. So *St. Paul* assures us, 2 Cor. 5. 1. *We know* (saith he) *when the earthly House of this Tabernacle shall be dissolv'd, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* And elsewhere, that a Crown of Righteousness is laid up for us, when the Mammon of Unrighteousness fails. And *St. Peter* tells us, that *an Inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, and that fadeth not away, is reserv'd in Heaven for us:* 1 Pet. 1. 4. But how may this be secur'd to us? Why, that we are told is by using and dispensing our worldly Goods aright; which is here call'd, *the making Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness.* *Solomon* tells us, that *Wealth maketh many Friends,* Prov. 19. 4. they that abound in Wealth and Power shall be sure to have Friends enough to partake of their Plenty, and to rejoice in their Prosperity.

But these are not the Friends that our Saviour here would have us to make with our Substance; for these commonly forsake us here in time of need, much less will they follow or stand us in any stead hereafter, for *the Friendship of this World is Enmity with God.*

But the Friends we are here advis'd to make, relate chiefly to another Life, at least the Returns of their Friendship are to be look'd for in the other World: And therefore we should not be desirous to be fully paid here in this Life, or carry our Recompence with us to the Grave; for then we can expect nothing after, but rather leave it to be paid in exchange in another Country, and to have our Reward reserv'd for us in Heaven.

But how may we thus make Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, or transfer our earthly Substance into the other World? Why, that is done by laying it out in Works of Piety and Mercy; by both which we make God our Debtor, who will repay more than a thousand fold.

(1.) I say, To make Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, is to make God our Debtor by Works of Piety; that is, by laying out some part of our Substance in pious Uses, such as the building, beautifying, and endowing of Churches, the advancing or supporting the Service of the Altar, and the like: what is thus laid out, is given unto God, and will be repaid in the other World with abundant Interest. This *Solomon* calls the honouring the Lord with our Substance; and what is thus done for God's Glory,

Glory, will in the end surely redound to our own. God esteems himself honour'd by this means, and *those that honour him, he will honour*. 'Tis recorded, to the Glory of Solomon, that Solomon built him a Temple, and that so glorious and magnificent a one too, that both that and himself became *the Praise of the whole Earth*.

(2.) We make Friends of the unrighteous Mammon, by Works of Mercy and Charity ; such as helping, counselling and relieving the Poor. By this too we make God our Debtor, for *he that giveth to the Poor, lendeth to the Lord* ; who will, in his due time, return it with unspeakable Advantage. The Friends we are here advis'd to make, are not such as are able to repay what they receive from us, for that is but Traffick or Merchandize : *Give not to the Rich (saith our Saviour) lest he repay thee again. If ye do good to them that do good to you, what Reward have ye ? Do not the Publicans and Sinners do the same ?* This is but *quid pro quo*, one thing for another, and carries no Obligation or Reward with it. But the Friends we are bid to make, are such as cannot repay us again ; for by so doing we make God our Friend, who is the Patron and Preserver of the Poor : the Kindness shew'd to them is reckon'd as done to God ; and because *they cannot recompense thee, thou shalt be recompens'd at the Resurrection of the Just*. But how are they said to receive us into everlasting Habitations ? Why, this may be by their Prayers and Intercessions to God for us ; for God heareth the Prayers of the Poor, and sheweth Favour to those that shew Kindness to them. Their Prayers and their Alms (like those of *Cornelius*) ascend up to Heaven, and come there as a Memorial before God, who, for receiving the Poor into their Houses, will reward them, with receiving them into his heavenly Habitations.

This is the Sense and Scope of this Day's Gospel, which I shall close up, first with a Caution against making Enemies of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, and next an Exhortation to make our selves Friends of it.

1. I say, Let us learn from hence to beware of making Enemies of the Mammon of Unrighteousness ; and that may be done either by the ill-getting or the ill-using of this World's Goods, or both. Ill-gotten Goods, instead of befriending, will appear as an Enemy and Witness against the Possessors. *Their Silver is cankered (saith St. James)* and the Rust of it will rise up in judgment against them ; and
having

Gospel for the ninth Sunday after Trinity. 251

having heap'd up Treasures by Oppression and Wrong, they only heap up to themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. And so do all they that misuse and pervert the Blessings of God to bad purposes, mispending their Substance in Riot and Luxury, making it the Fuel of their Lusts, or the Instruments of their Pride and Vanity : All such, instead of making Friends of the unrighteous Mammon, to receive them into everlasting Habitations, only make Enemies of it to receive them into everlasting Damnation. Wherefore,

Lastly, Let us labour so to get, and so to use the good things of this Life, that they may befriend us at last, and bring us to the true Riches of Heaven ; and that must be by using them aright to the Glory of God, and to the Benefit and Comfort both of our selves and others. By thus dispensing them in Acts of Piety, Charity, and Mercy, they will speak for us, and procure for us the Favour and Friendship both of God and Man. In a word, they will tend to our present Comfort and Welfare here, and promote our eternal Joy and Happiness hereafter : Which God grant, &c.



D I S-



DISCOURSE XXX.

The EPISTLE for the Tenth Sunday after
Trinity.

I Cor. xii. 1 ——— 12.

Concerning spiritual Gifts, Brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carry'd away unto these dumb Idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no Man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and that no Man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches the Lord, to let his merciful Ears be open to the Prayers of his humble Servants, and that they may obtain their Petitions, to make them ask such things as shall please him. And that we may be the better enabled to ask such things,

The Epistle for the Day treats *concerning spiritual Gifts*, which the Apostle here declares to be so useful and so necessary a piece of Knowledge, that he would by no means have us ignorant of it. And to the end that the Christian Church might be rightly instructed in so divine and excellent a Subject, he here treats at large of the Nature, the Author, the Number, and the Use of these spiritual Gifts. But before he begins, he puts these *Corinthians* in mind of their former Heathen State, and how they were acted and misled by evil Spirits, before they receiv'd the Gospel. *Ye know* (saith he) *that ye were Gentiles, carry'd away unto these dumb Idols, even as ye were led*: meaning, that before they became Christians, they were led altogether by the Heathen Oracles, who pretended to foretel things to come: and their Desire of knowing such things seduc'd them into Idolatry; where all the Answers and Account they had in those Matters, came not from the Idols or the Priests, but from the Devil in them: and therefore that they might know

know those that are taught by the Spirit of God, from those that are acted by the Devil, he gives us two Marks of Distinction to discern between them: The first is, that no Man that is led or mov'd by the Spirit of God, will ever speak evil of Jesus; *Wherefore* (saith he) *I give you to understand, that no Man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed*: for that takes Men off from all the Heathen Blasphemies, and leads to the knowledg of the Truth, as it is in Jesus. The second is, that all that truly own and give up themselves to Jesus Christ, are acted by that Divine Spirit; for the evil Spirits do all they can to hinder the Doctrine and Designs of Christ's Kingdom: and therefore the Apostle adds, that *no Man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*. Where we have the Author of these spiritual Gifts, which the Apostle here tells us is the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, whose peculiar Office, in the Business of Man's Salvation, is to edify and instruct the Church of Christ, by which he enlightens our Minds, and instils his Gifts and Graces into our Hearts; which are therefore call'd spiritual Gifts, not because they are seated in the spiritual Part or Soul of Man, but because they proceed from the Holy Spirit of God: which we must not so understand, as to exclude the Father and the Son from having any hand in these Gifts, or the bestowing of them; for St. James tells us, *that every good and perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights*; Jam. 1. 17. And St. Paul, *that when Christ ascended up on high, he gave Gifts unto Men*; Eph. 4. 8. So that these Gifts come from the other two Persons no less than from the third, according to that known Rule, *Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*; The outward Works of the Trinity, relating to any without them, are never divided, but what one doth they all do. But yet these Gifts are more particularly attributed to the Holy Spirit, rather by way of Congruity than otherwise, as referring to some particular or personal Attribute of his from whence they flow: for there are some Properties and Perfections of the Deity, which tho common to all the three Persons, yet the Effects of them are more especially and severally ascrib'd to each distinct Person; as Creation to the Father, Redemption to the Son, and Sanctification to the Holy Ghost. And hence it is, that these spiritual Gifts, which tend to the instructing and sanctifying the People of God, are more peculiarly attributed to

254 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*
to the Holy Ghost, whose Office it is. This for the Author of these spiritual Gifts.

From whence the Apostle proceeds, in the next Verse, to the Number and Variety of them; saying, *Now there are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are Differences of Administrations, but the same Lord; and there are Diversities of Operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all*: where the Apostle distinguisheth between Gifts, Administrations, and Operations, observing a Difference and Diversity between them, and yet ascribing them all to the same Author, under the Titles of the *same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God, who worketh all in all*; that is, who worketh all these things in all that have them.

As for the Diversity of Gifts, Administrations, and Operations, they are generally thus distinguish'd. By Gifts here, are meant those inward Endowments or Qualifications, whereby Men are enabled to do or perform any thing; these are set down in the 8th, 9th and 10th Verses of this Chapter, which shall be consider'd in their Place. By Administrations are meant the outward Calling, Function, or Office, whereby they are lawfully call'd and authoris'd to do it. These are set down in the 28th Verse of this Chapter. By Operations are meant the Effects or Works wrought or executed by the two former: These are too many to be set down; only care must be taken, that as every Calling hath its own proper Work, so every one should know and keep to it. Now all these are here said to proceed from *the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God*; meaning such a Spirit as is both Lord and God, and that is only the Holy Ghost.

But what was the End or Use of these spiritual Gifts? Why, that the next Verse will tell us; *The Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal*: where by the Manifestation of the Spirit, is meant the Exercise of the Gifts and Graces confer'd on any by the Holy Spirit, which manifest his Power and Goodness to the Church of Christ; and where any of these Gifts appear'd in any Person, especially in any eminent sort or degree, it was a manifest Sign that the Spirit of God wrought in him: and therefore these spiritual Gifts are truly call'd the Manifestation of the Spirit, as any other sensible Effect is a Manifestation of its proper Cause. And this is here said to be given to every Man, not to be merited or purchas'd by any, but

but confer'd by a free Donation, and convey'd merely by a Deed of Gift.

But the End for which they were given, is what the Apostle here chiefly aims at. The *Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man*; but for what? Why, *to profit withal*. 'Tis not to please or pride our selves, and so to use them for Vanity and Ostentation; to set forth our selves, or to raise Admiration in others by our Eloquence or elaborate Arts of Speech, as some of these *Corinthians* did, and too many in our days still do: much less were they given to raise Schisms and Factions in the Church, by instilling the Poison of Errors and Divisions into the Minds of the People, and sowing the Seeds of Discord and Dissension among them. To this bad use many of the *Corinthians* put their spiritual Gifts, by which means they fell into divers Sects and Parties, some saying, *I am of Paul*, others *I am of Apollo*; a third sort, *I am of Cephas*; and a fourth, *I am of Christ*: which made the Apostle ask the Question, *Is Christ divided*? Hath he not stil'd his Church one Body, and will'd that there be no Schism or Separation in it? How then can he like the tearing or reuding one Member from another in his Body? Hath he not told us of *one Baptism* that leads into his Church, and of *one Communion* to confirm and unite us together in it? How then can he approve of different Communions, or divided Ways of Worship? Did not Christ press his Disciples to Unity? and likewise pray to his Father, that they all might be one, even as he and his Father are one? that is, with the most intire Unity of Heart and Mind. This was the last Prayer he made for them, and the last Legacy he bequeath'd to them: And how opposite to this are all Discord and Dissension in the Worship of God? They who use their Parts to these bad purposes, grossly abuse the Gifts of God, and will have a heavy Account to make for it at the last Day. For the Manifestation of the Spirit was given not to do harm, but *to profit withal*; that is, not only to procure some private Profit to themselves, tho that be not altogether excluded, but for the publick Good and Benefit of others. They were given for the Edification of the Church, not for the Destruction of it; and consequently are to be employ'd for the Advancement of Peace, Unity, and Order in the Church, which tend to the Welfare and Settlement of it; not to foment and propagate Divisions, or introduce Strife and Confusion, which lead to its Ruin and Destruction.

*

All

All then that have any share in these Gifts and Endowments of the Spirit, are to lay them out according to the Degree and Measure they have receiv'd, for the publick Good: *As every one hath receiv'd the Gift* (saith the Apostle) *even so minister the same one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold Grace of God*; 1 Pet. 4. 10. Where we are bid to look upon our selves, not so much as Owners, but as Stewards of what we have. Now the Office of a Steward, you know, is not to hide or embezel his Master's Goods, but to employ them for his benefit, and to give to every one of the Household his Portion of Meat in due season. This is the End and Use of all our Gifts, natural and temporal, as well as spiritual; which the Will of the Donor, and the Nature and Quality of the Gifts require and call for at our hands: and that because our own Insufficiency of our selves puts us in mutual need of the Gifts and Assistance of one another. If a Man could come to that All-sufficiency in himself, as to be able to say to his Brethren, *I have no need of you*, then might he keep his Gifts to himself: till then let him remember, he is to employ his Talent to the profit of his Master, and to the benefit of his Brother; for *the Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal*.

For the better clearing and confirming hereof, the Apostle proceeds to the Distribution of these spiritual Gifts; shewing that they are not all given to one, nor are the same given to all, but they are scatter'd with an admirable variety, and in different measures on the Sons of Men, that like the various Members of the natural Body, they might be all helpful and serviceable to one another. There is none so mean, but may be useful to the greatest; and there is none so great, but may sometimes stand in need of the Service of the meanest.

For to one is given by the Spirit (saith the Apostle) *the Word of Wisdom*. By which we may understand the Revelation of the Gospel, which is in Scripture often call'd the Wisdom of God in Christ. St. Paul styles the Evangelical Doctrine and Mysteries by the name of Wisdom, and distinguishes it too from the Philosophy of the Heathens, and the Wisdom of this World; 1 Cor. 2. 6, 7. *Howbeit* (saith he) *we speak Wisdom, yet not the Wisdom of this World, but we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom, the Revelation whereof God ordain'd before the World unto our glory*. This Word of Wisdom, or
Reve-

Revelation of the Myſteries of the Goſpel, was firſt given to the Apoſtles, who were the firſt Preachers and Diſcoverers of it unto the World. And this is here ſaid to be given by the Spirit, the Holy Ghoſt inſpiring them with thoſe Abilities, as enabled them to underſtand thoſe Myſteries themſelves, and likewise to publiſh and unfold them unto others. Again,

To another is given the Word of Knowledge by the ſame Spirit. Where by *the Word of Knowledge* is meant the Knowledge of things paſt, preſent, and to come; the Knowledge of things ſecret, ſuch as the Will of God, and the Thoughts of Men; of remote things, as of what was done in other places; of future things, as of what would come to paſs hereafter: all which are reveal'd by the ſame Spirit, which alone can communicate to any the Knowledge of theſe things. By this it was, that *St. Peter* knew that *Ananias* and *Saphira* lyed to the Holy Ghoſt, *Acts* 5. 3. that *Agabus* foretold the Famine in the days of *Claudius Ceſar*, *Acts* 11. 28. By this it was, that *Ananias* knew the Conversion of *St. Paul*, *Acts* 9. 10. and that *St. Paul* told the Centurion before the ſhipwreck, that not a Man in the Ship ſhould be loſt, *Acts* 27. 23, 24. The Knowledge of which things could not be attain'd in any ordinary way, but was reveal'd to them by the Holy Spirit. Again,

To another is given Faith by the ſame Spirit. Where by *Faith* we are to underſtand not the common and ordinary Gift or Grace of Faith, but a miraculous Faith, by which he that had it was able to work divers kind of Miracles. Of this our Saviour ſpeaks, *Mat.* 17. 20. that he who hath it ſhall ſay unto this Mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it ſhall remove; and nothing ſhall be impoſſible to you. To which the Apoſtle refers, in ſaying, *If I had all Faith, ſo that I could move Mountains*, 1 *Cor.* 13. 2. Others take Faith here for that ſupernatural Courage and Confidence, with which the Apoſtles were endow'd for withſtanding all the Oppoſition they met with from Men or Devils; for we read in the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, with what undaunted Boldneſs and Courage they appear'd before the Jewish and Heathen Tribunals, ſtill owning and adhering to the Name of Jeſus, notwithstanding all the Threats and Terrors denounc'd againſt them. This extraordinary Confidence and Reſolution proceeded likewise from the Spirit of God, which inſpir'd them with a Courage ſuitable to their Cauſe, and carry'd them on above and

beyond all Opposition. So we read of St. Stephen and others, that all their Adversaries could not gainsay or resist the Wisdom and Spirit with which they spake; *Acts* 6. 10. Again,

To another is given the Gifts of Healing by the same Spirit. By these are meant the Power of curing all Diseases both of Body and Mind without the help of Physick, by the sole mentioning the Name of Jesus. Thus we find the Apostles curing the Blind and the Lame with a word's speaking, healing Lunatics and Demoniacs, and casting out Devils only by calling over them the Name of Jesus: which made the Disciples acquaint our Saviour, not only of their healing all manner of Diseases, but that *even the Devils were subject to them through his Name*, *Luke* 10. 17. This Power likewise proceeded from the same Spirit of God, who over-rules all evil Spirits, and hath all Principalities and Powers subject to him. Moreover,

To another is given the working of Miracles. This being mention'd as distinct from the former, must be meant of the Power of working Signs and Wonders in the Heavens, and more especially of raising the Dead, the greatest of all Miracles. So we read of the Apostles, that they restor'd many from Death to Life, which is ascrib'd here and elsewhere to the Divine Power of the Holy Ghost. Again,

To another is given the Gift of Prophecy: that is, either the Faculty of expounding the Holy Scripture, or the Power of foretelling things to come; both which come also from the Spirit of God.

Furthermore, *To another is given the discerning of Spirits:* that is, a Gift of knowing true Prophets from false, and discerning the divine Inspirations of God's Holy Spirit, from the evil Suggestions of the Devil; and thereby a Faculty of distinguishing Impostors and false Teachers from the true Ministers of Christ.

To another is given (as our Apostle goes on) the Gift of divers kind of Tongues: that is, an Ability of speaking several Languages which they had never learnt, receiving them not by any previous Art or Education, but by the sudden Infusion and Inspiration of the Holy Spirit; which Gift of Tongues serv'd as a miraculous Act, both to confirm the Truth of the Gospel, and to reveal it to Men of all Nations and Languages.

Lastly, 'tis added, *To another the Interpretation of Tongues:* which shews this to be a distinct Gift from the Gift of Tongues;

Epistle for the tenth Sunday after Trinity. 259

Tongues ; for some had the one, that had not the other, not being able to interpret that in the vulgar Tongue, which themselves utter'd in a strange Language : and therefore certain Persons were enabled to speak that to the Understanding of the People, which they understood not in the Language in which the Apostles spoke. And this was the Gift of the Interpretation of Tongues : *Do all speak with Tongues ? Do all interpret ?* saith the Apostle, *ver. 30.* implying these to be different Gifts, and that the one might be without the other.

But all these (saith he) worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will : meaning, that they all come from the same Holy Spirit of God, who bestows them in various measures and proportions, according to his Good-pleasure, for the Benefit and Edification of his Church.

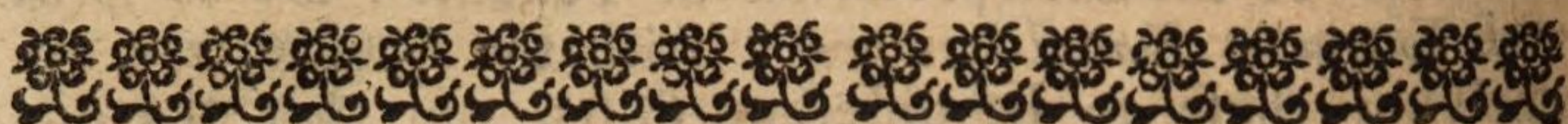
This is briefly the Substance of this Day's Epistle, which may teach us several Lessons : As,

1. From the Apostle's stiling all these by the Name of Gifts, we may learn not to boast or be lifted up, on the account of any of them : for *what hast thou (saith the Apostle) which thou hast not receiv'd ? And if thou hast receiv'd it, why boastest thou thy self, as if thou receiv'dst not ?* If thou hast a double Portion of the Spirit, or a larger share of these spiritual Gifts than others, remember they are but given to thee, and ask thy self who made thee to differ : 'twas not thy own Worth or Industry, but the sole Goodness and Bounty of Heaven ; which may check all Pride, and teach thee to think soberly of thy self.

2. If these be all the Gifts of God, then we may learn hence whom to thank, and where to seek for them. All the Praise and Glory of them is due to God only ; and therefore ascribe nothing to thy self, but thy Weaknesses and Imperfections. And 'tis Prayer to him that is the best means of attaining them : *If any Man lack Wisdom (saith St. James) let him ask it of God, who giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not ;* James i. 5.

Lastly, If the Manifestation of the Spirit be given to profit withal, then let us learn to use the Gifts and Graces bestow'd upon us to that end ; let us diligently employ them in the Calling wherein God hath set us, for the Good of our selves and one another ; beware of abusing them to wrong Ends, to the dishonour of God, or the detriment of

thy Neighbour : Do not put thy Parts to the maintenance of Schism, or the disturbance of the Church, but labour to promote the Peace, Unity, and Edification of it. So shalt thou avoid the Doom of the slothful, and receive the Reward of the faithful Servant, to enter into his Master's Joy.



DISCOURSE XXXI.

The GOSPEL for the Tenth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Luke xix. 41—47.

And when he was come near, he beheld the City, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, &c.

THE preceding part of this Chapter acquaints us with Christ's going to *Jerusalem*, together with the Manner and other Circumstances of his Entrance and Reception into it.

The Gospel for this Day, which immediately follows it, lets us know his Carriage upon his near approach and sight of the City : *When he was come near, he beheld the City, and wept over it.* The Reason or Motive whereof was, his knowing the sad Fate or dreadful Destruction that would shortly befall it ; of which we read after. The Thoughts of the dismal Miseries and Calamities that were coming upon it, drew Tears from his Eyes, and Compassion from his Heart : and both were attended with a most passionate Wish, that they would yet know and consider before it be too late, what might help to prevent that doleful Ruin, that was hastning upon them. *He beheld the City, and wept over it, saying, O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy Peace!*

Sure,

Gospel for the tenth Sunday after Trinity. 261

Sure, the Circumstances of their Condition must be very sad and dreadful, when our Saviour could not see the City without weeping: but that which most of all increas'd his Sorrow, was their stupid Senselessness of their Condition, that they would not so much as consider, or *know the things belonging to their Peace*, insomuch that *they were now hidden from their eyes*. Their Doom was irreversibile, and therefore he pity'd them the more, because they had no Pity for themselves. Now here,

1st, From our Saviour's weeping over *Jerusalem*, we may observe his tender Sense and Concern for the Miseries and Calamities of other Men; and that may teach us to shew Pity and Compassion upon the like occasions. Christ was mightily affected with the Evils that beset any; he wept at the Grave of *Lazarus*, and here we find him weeping for the City of *Jerusalem*. From his Example we may learn the same Sympathy and Fellow-feeling of others Sufferings. True Religion makes the Heart tender, and apt to commiserate; it makes the Bowels yearn towards the Miserable, and to bear a share in the Calamities of others. 'Tis the hard-hearted and narrow-spirited that cast off all Care or Concern for others Happiness or Misery; and there are but too many such, who if they fare well themselves, care not what becomes of others: but they who shew no mercy, seldom or never find any. Again,

2^{dly}, From our Saviour's passionate Wish, that they had laid hold of those happy Opportunities, which were offer'd to them for their own Safety, we learn his Backwardness to punish, and his Willingness to pardon. He doth not delight in the Death of a Sinner, nor willingly grieve the Children of Men; he is troubled and concern'd for their Folly, when he is driven to it, and bespeaks them as God did *Ephraim*, *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim?* In like manner our Saviour was deeply affected at the sight of *Jerusalem*, his Bowels were turn'd within him, and could not but break into Tears for a City that had made it self ripe for Destruction. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, (saith he in another place) *how often would I have gather'd thee as a Hen gathereth her Chicken under her wing? and thou wouldst not.* And here, *O that thou hadst known the things, which belong unto thy Peace!* which he doubles and trebles with Earnestness and Affection, *Even thou, in this thy day. Even thou, who hast had so many Admonitions, so great Obligations, and such plain Directions to prevent these Evils: Even thou,*
S 3 of

of whom so great care hath been taken, and to whom so much Mercy hath been shewn, O that thou hadst hearken'd to these things, and suffer'd them so far to have prevail'd upon thee, as to avert thine utter Ruin ! Once more, *Even thou, in this thy day* ; that is, tho thou hadst neglected many a Call, and let slip many Opportunities, yet 'twas to be wish'd thou hadst at least minded the main Season, or not suffer'd the last and critical time of thy Welfare or Destruction to pass away unobserv'd. All which shews the merciful and gracious Temper of our Blessed Saviour, and likewise how opposite thereunto those unrelenting Spirits are, who delight in giving trouble, and doing hard things to those of their own kind.

3dly, From Christ's wishing in the behalf of *Jerusalem*, that they had known, *in this their day*, the things that belong'd to their peace, we learn that all Men, both in their publick and private Capacity, have a Day of Grace, or particular Season of making their peace with God, and preventing their future Ruin. This is here manifestly imply'd, and signifies, that if we have the Wisdom to know, and the Foresight to improve this Opportunity to the best advantage, we may obtain the Favour of God, and secure our everlasting Welfare : for the having *this their day* for that purpose, was not a Favour peculiar only to *Jerusalem*, but is a Mercy extended to all Persons and Places ; to whom God Almighty is pleas'd to allot a particular Time or Season of reconciling themselves to him, and promoting thereby their own Salvation.

Some have observ'd, that even in the Course of worldly Affairs, all Men have some critical Time or Opportunity of making or mending their Fortunes here in this Life ; which if neglected or let slip, is not easily regain'd. *Esau* that sold his Birthright for a Mess of Pottage, could not afterward obtain it, tho *he sought it carefully with Tears*. And we have known many, who have complain'd of the loss of some Seasons and Opportunities of bettering their Conditions, which they could never after recover.

But this is more plainly reveal'd of our future and final State in the World to come ; for the Holy Scriptures often mind us of a Day of Grace, or Season of Salvation, in which we are call'd upon to mind the Business of our Souls, and to provide for Eternity. Of *this day* our Saviour here minds the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* ; and the Apostle puts all Christians in mind, that *whilst it is call'd to-day,*

Gospel for the tenth Sunday after Trinity. 263

to-day, they should hearken to the Voice of God, lest their Hearts be harden'd thro the Deceitfulness of Sin. Now this Day of Grace and Salvation may be understood either of the whole Space of our Life, which for the Shortness of it, is in Scripture often call'd and compar'd to a Day; or else more particularly, for the present time or instant part of it, which is all that we can call our own, or safely depend upon: So the Apostle, *Now is the appointed time, now is the Day of Salvation; 2 Cor. 6. 2.* Hereafter may be nothing to us, because we are not sure of living to it: the present time is our Opportunity, for we are not certain of any more; or if our Days be prolong'd, we are not sure that the Means of Grace may be so too, for *the Spirit of God will not always strive with us.* Now is God's time and ours too, which we are therefore to lay hold of and improve, for we know not how long it may continue: the Day of Grace may be over, before the Days of our Life may be ended, not for want of Mercy and Favour in God, but for want of a Will or Heart to repent, to make us capable of it. The Heart may be harden'd by a Custom in sinning, and many by long contracted Habits have outliv'd the Possibility of Repentance; the Conscience may be so fear'd, as with an hot Iron, that nothing can awaken or make any Impression upon it: And therefore, *Now whilst 'tis called to-day,* we are call'd upon to repent, and to accept of Mercy and Salvation; and this is *our Day,* in which we are *to know and consider the things that belong unto our Peace.*

4^{thly}, From these Words of our Saviour, *But now they are hid from our eyes;* we learn the Danger of deferring Repentance, or putting off the Day of Grace; which if let slip, will not be had any more. This was the wretched and remediless State of *Jerusalem*, which made our Saviour lament and weep over it: and he who afterwards shed his Blood for their Salvation, here shed his Tears for their Folly in neglecting it. They had their Day of knowing and making their peace with God; but letting slip the Season, they were left for ever to repent without any Hopes of repairing it. And 'twill fare no better with us; if we neglect our time, and let go the Season of finding Mercy, we may never look for it again, but must remain for ever in a hopeless and helpless Condition. Opportunities that were once before us will soon slip away, and perhaps look back to deride our Folly in not making better use of them: the

S 4

things

things of our Peace, that are now plainly in our sight, will e'er long be *hid from our eyes*, and then 'twill be too late to amend what we shall for ever lament. This we may easily see here in the case of *Jerusalem*, of whom we read in the next words,

The Days shall come upon thee, that thine Enemies shall cast a Trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the Ground, and thy Children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one Stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy Visitation. This was a Prophecy of the Romans speedy coming to besiege and destroy the City, and all that were in it; which soon after came to pass in all the Particulars of the Prophecy: for *Titus* the Roman General coming with an Army to besiege *Jerusalem*, first cast a Trench about it, to cut off all Communication, and intercept Provisions; then he compass'd it round with a Wall thirty nine Furlongs long, containing within it thirteen Castles or Forts, in compass ten Furlongs, all which (as *Josephus* tells us) was finish'd in three Days; *de Bell. Jud. lib. 6. cap. 8.* By this the People were kept in on every side, there being no possibility of their coming out; which reduc'd them to the greatest Distress, even to the eating Dung and Dirt, Hay and Mens Flesh; yea, and (as *Josephus* relates it) Women feeding on their own sucking Children. After which, the City was laid even with the Ground, and the Children within it; there being not one Stone left upon another.

But what was the reason of all this Misery and Desolation? Why, that is added in the following words, *Because thou knewest not the time of thy Visitation.* They would not know or improve the Time of God's visiting them in Mercy and Loving-kindness; nor would they consider or prevent the Time of his visiting them with Vengeance and Destruction, and therefore did all this Distress come upon them. Obstinate and incorrigible Wickedness exposes Men to the Wrath of God, and the forest of all his Judgments. The old World for not hearkning to *Noah* a Preacher of Righteousness, but going on still in their Wickedness, were swept away with a Deluge, and irrecoverably drown'd in Misery and Perdition. *Sodom* and *Gomorrak*, for not amending upon the Admonitions and Example of righteous *Lot*, were consum'd by a Fire from Heaven; and burning in their Lusts one to another, were made to suffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire. In like manner,

'twas

Gospel for the tenth Sunday after Trinity. 265

'twas the Obstinacy and Impenitence of the Jews, their wilful Refusal of the Means of Salvation, that occasion'd the Sacking and Destruction of their City: They had many repeated Warnings to avoid the Danger, many loud Calls and passionate Invitations to Repentance, to prevent their Ruin; but they turn'd the deaf Ear to them all, and nothing could prevail with them to accept their own Happiness. Instead of hearkning to, they *kill'd the Prophets, and ston'd them that were sent to them*; and the Judgment that follow'd it was, *Behold your House is left unto you desolate*, Mat. 23. 37, 38. Therefore is Desolation come upon you; your City, Temple, and whole Nation are irreversibly destroy'd; your City for the Oppression and Injustice practis'd in it, your Temple for not hearkning to the Instructions deliver'd in it, and your whole Nation for abusing the Mercies and Blessings conferr'd on it. Thus they who wilfully refus'd the Offers of Mercy, became the Objects of Vengeance, and are set forth as Monuments of Divine Justice to all succeeding Generations, to let us know, that if we follow their Steps, we must expect the same Fate; and *except we repent, we must all likewise perish*.

This is the first Part of the Gospel for this Day, which is design'd for a Warning to all wilful and impenitent Sinners. There is yet a second Part of it, which relates to the Reverence due to the Temple, or the publick Places of God's Worship, held forth in the following words; *And he went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, saying, My House is the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves.* Where we shall observe,

1st, That publick Places were set apart for Divine Worship both under the Old and New Testament, and that not only by the Divine Liking and Approbation, but by Divine Appointment and Designation. This is evident in the Old Testament, by the Tabernacle first, and afterward by the Temple; the former being stil'd *the Tent which God had pitch'd among Men*, Psal. 78. 60. the latter, *the Sanctuary, the high and holy Place, and the Place which he had chosen to set his Name there*: with many other Expressions to the like purpose. In the New Testament 'tis plain from those words of the Apostle, *Have ye not Houses to eat and drink in, but despise ye the Church of God?* 1 Cor.

I Cor. 11. 22. Where the Church of God being oppos'd to Houses where they might eat and drink, must be understood of the Publick Place of God's Worship, where such common and ordinary Actions are not to be done. This is so fully prov'd by the Learned Mr. *Mede* on that Place, that I need not enlarge upon it, but refer the Reader to him.

2dly, We may observe farther, that the publick Places of Divine Worship were and still are to be accounted *Holy unto the Lord*; not indeed by any inherent Holiness, for neither Times nor Places are capable of that, but by a relative Holiness, because they belong to God, and are separated from all common Uses, and apply'd only to holy and religious Purposes. Thus the Sabbath-day is call'd Holy, because 'tis set apart for the Service of God, and other Holy Uses; and for the same reason the Sanctuary, the Temple, the Church, are to be accounted *Holy unto the Lord*, being appropriated wholly to his Use and Service. From whence we may observe,

3dly, That some kind of Respect and Reverence is due to such Places, for the Relation they bear to God, and their Dedication to his Worship. So God himself expressly commands, *Ye shall sanctify my Sabbath, and reverence my Sanctuary*; Lev. 19. 30. God's more immediate Presence there requires from us the Respect of the Cap and the Knee; and his Promise to meet, to direct, to assist and bless us there, calls for a greater Regard to be paid to it, than other ordinary Places. To satisfy us herein, we may,

4thly, Observe our Saviour's great Care to keep the Temple from Profanation. For going into the Temple, and finding Buyers and Sellers there, he cast them out with great Indignation, and forbid the carrying of any Vessel or Burden thro' it. St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* tell us, that our Saviour himself overthrew the Tables of the Money-Changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves; tho' they pretended to sit there for the Convenience of Offerings and Sacrifices for the Use of the Temple. And St. *John*, that he made a Scourge of small Cords, and drove them all out of the Temple; which he did with that Indignation and Zeal, as made the Disciples call to mind that propheticall Saying of *David* concerning him, *The Zeal of thy House hath eaten me up*, as we read, *John* 2. 14, 15, &c. From hence a Learned Divine hath observ'd, That our Saviour, whilst he was upon Earth, never exercis'd any kingly or coercive Jurisdiction,

Gospel for the tenth Sunday after Trinity. 267

risdiction, but in vindicating his Father's House from Profanation, which he could not see prostituted to vile and vulgar Uses, nor suffer it to be defecrated and profan'd.

To all which he adds that smart Saying and Rebuke; *It is written, My House is the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves.* The Saying is written in *Isa. 56. 7. Mine House shall be called an House of Prayer for all People.* Where we have,

(1.) God Almighty's Right or Title to the Temple or Church asserted; for he calls it *My House*, and justly too, being devoted and consecrated to him: by which it is made his Peculiar, and no other may lay any Claim, or pretend to any Property in it.

(2.) We have the Use to which it was design'd, and is to be put; *it shall be called an House of Prayer*: that is, the Place where all our solemn Prayers, Praises, Devotion and Sacrifice are to be offer'd up.

(3.) We have the Persons for whose Use it was intended; and that is, *πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσι*, for all People and Nations: which was a Prophecy of the coming in of the Gentiles, who should be all gather'd into one Flock, and meet in one Fold, and so be all joyful together in his House of Prayer.

Lastly, We have our Saviour's Rebuke for profaning the Temple, and converting the House of God to vulgar and common Uses; making the House of Prayer a Den of Thieves. *Ye have made it a House of Merchandize*, saith he in *St. Matthew*; a Place of Trade for selling of *Oxen, and Sheep, and other Cattle*, saith he in *St. Mark* and *St. John*. And here, ye have made it a *Den of Thieves*, by the Fraud and Theft so frequently committed therein.

Having thus turn'd the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, and so rescu'd it from Abuse and Profanation, he restor'd it to its Right, by making it a House of Prayer, and the Place of teaching and instructing the People; for so the last words tell us, *And he taught daily in the Temple.* And of the Apostles we read after, that they were continually in the Temple blessing and praising God; *Luke 24. 53.*

Thus I have briefly summ'd up the whole of this Day's Gospel; which we may improve and apply to many good Purposes. As,

1. From God's dealing with *Jerusalem*, we learn his great Goodness in allotting to them and us a Day of Grace, and giving

giving both Time and Means of working out our own Salvation. He is not wanting to any, in affording them Ways and Opportunities of being happy, but is ever ready to assist them with Grace and Strength to that end; yea, he importunes them to know the Time, and accept the Terms of Peace, and sends his Messengers and Ambassadors to beseech them to be reconcil'd. Such is the Mercy and Goodness of God towards his Creatures, that he leaves no ways unattempted to provide for, and to compass their eternal Welfare.

He doth not indeed force them to be happy, nor yet doom them to be miserable, but hath made them rational Creatures, and set Life and Death before them, giving them sufficient Time, Strength and Encouragement to chuse the one, and escape the other. So that he hath left all obstinate Sinners without Excuse; and if any miscarry, their Misery will lie at their own door, and their Destruction is of themselves.

2. Since God hath given every one of us time and space for Repentance, let us all improve it to the Benefit and best Advantage of our Souls. We see God hath not been any way wanting to us, let not us then be wanting to ourselves; but having a Prize put into our hands, let us have Hearts to make a right Use of it. 'Tis the Apostle's Advice, to know the Time, that now 'tis high time to awake out of the Sleep of Sin, and to mind our own Salvation. We see how it far'd with *Jerusalem*, for not considering the Time and Things that belong'd to their Peace, how for that reason they were hid from their Eyes, and what Miseries befel them for not knowing the Day of their Visitation. Remember that our Time too is passing away; beware then of slipping our Opportunity, which being lost, cannot be regain'd. While the Day lasts let us work, because the Night is hastning upon us, when no Man can work.

Lastly, From our Saviour's casting those that bought and sold out of the Temple, and rebuking those that turn'd the House of Prayer into a House of Merchandize, or a Den of Thieves, let us learn to pay all due Reverence and Respect to God's House, and beware of profaning it by any rude or unbecoming Actions: having Houses to eat and drink, to buy and sell in, let us do those things at home, and not make the House of God an Alehouse or a Market; but preserve it pure and free from all common,

mon, and much more from all sinful Uses: so shall our Prayers ascend up from thence like Incense, and yield a sweet-smelling Savour, &c.



DISCOURSE XXXII.

The EPISTLE for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

I Cor. xv. 1—12.

Brethren, I deliver'd unto you the Gospel, which I preach'd unto you, &c.

WE are taught to pray this Day for such a Measure of Divine Grace, that by running the way of God's Commandments, we may obtain his gracious Promises, and be made Partakers of his Heavenly Treasure. The Grace here chiefly pray'd for, is the Grace of Faith, to which the running the Paths of God's Commandments, and the obtaining the Promises, are frequently ascrib'd. And in this we may be the more confirm'd by the Epistle appointed for the Day; in which the Apostle labours to establish the *Corinthians*, and in them all Christians in a firm Belief of the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of our Saviour: which he the rather did, because some false Teachers had crept in among them, who deny'd the Resurrection, and had shaken the Faith of many in that great Article, as some have likewise attempted to do in our Days.

Now to arm them against such false Teachers, and to prevent the Poison and Contagion of their corrupt Doctrines, he here gives them an Antidote to keep them sound in the Faith, and to confirm them in the Belief of this and other great Articles of it. To which end, he

First, Puts these *Corinthians* in mind of what he had before taught them, and how they embrac'd it, and for some time made no Question, or entertain'd any Doubt concerning it: So he tells them, *ver. 1. Brethren* (saith he) *I declare unto you the Gospel which I preach'd unto you, which al-*
so

so you receiv'd, and wherein you stand. And the better to keep them stedfast in the Faith, he

Secondly, Minds them not only of the Excellency, but the Necessity of it to Salvation; *ver. 2. By which also ye are sav'd*: that is, by this Faith you were converted to Christianity, and turn'd from the Darknes of Paganism to the Light of the Gospel, and so are put into a State of Salvation, which he therefore tells them was worthy to be remembred, and kept still in memory, without which all their former believing would be in vain, and to no purpose: *If ye keep in memory* (saith he) *what I preach'd unto you*, it will assuredly bring you to Salvation; but if ye forget or let it slip, and much more if ye revolt and turn from it, then our Preaching to you will be in vain, and your Faith is also vain. To prevent which, and to refresh their Memories, he

Thirdly, Let's them know his Fidelity in delivering his Message, and imparting the Truths of the Gospel to them; *ver. 3. I deliver'd unto you first of all that which I also receiv'd*: meaning, that he did not forge or falsify with them, neither adding to nor concealing any thing from them, but freely and fairly deliver'd what he was intrusted withal, and charg'd to communicate to them; and then gives them a brief Summary of the Doctrine deliver'd by him in this and the following Verse, namely, *How that Christ died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he was bury'd, and that he rose again the third Day, according to the Scriptures*: which great Points are three fundamental Articles of our Faith, containing what our Saviour did and suffer'd for our Redemption, and consequently necessary to be believ'd by all that expect any Interest in or Benefit by it. The

1st Whereof is, *That Christ died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures*: where we have the Passion or Death of Christ, *he died*; and likewise the Cause or Reason of it, 'twas *for our Sins*, together with the Confirmation of both, according to the Scriptures. For his Death, it was the most bitter, barbarous, and bloody one that could be undergone; a Death wherein the Wrath of God, the Fury of Men, and the Rage of all the Powers of Darknes most fatally conspir'd: *He was obedient to Death* (saith the Apostle) *even the Death of the Cross*; which of all the Roman ways of Execution was the most painful and the most ignominious, being attended with all the Cruelty and Shame that

Epistle for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity. 271

that could be shew'd to the vilest Malefactor. And of this accursed Death both the *Jews* and *Romans* were the Witnesses, as well as the bloody Instruments.

But what was the Guilt that expos'd him to so heavy a Punishment? Why, not his own, for he had no Sin, nor was any Guile found in his Mouth, but ours, for which he undertook to be the Propitiation. He himself was *holy, harmless, undefil'd, separate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens*, Heb. 7. 26. and so could not be liable to Death upon his own score; but taking upon him our Sins, he became obnoxious to the Punishment due to them, and so laid down his Life for the Expiation. He was *deliver'd up to Death for our Offences*, saith St. Paul, Rom. 4. 25. *Christ suffer'd once for Sins* (saith St. Peter) *the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us unto God*; 1 Pet. 3. 18. And all this according to the Scriptures; that is, according to the Prophecies and Predictions of the Old Testament, where the Death and Passion of the Messiah is plainly foretold and recorded. All the Sacrifices under the Law, where all things were purg'd with Blood, and without the shedding of Blood was no Remission, were but so many Types and Shadows of this great propitiatory Sacrifice under the Gospel, where this Lamb of God was slain to take away the Sins of the World: of which the Prophet *Isaiah* gave such a lively and particular Account many hundred years before, as if he had liv'd to see it actually done; Chap. 53. *All we* (saith he) *like Sheep have gone astray, we have turn'd every one to his own way, and the Lord hath lain on him the Iniquity of us all. He was oppress'd, and he was afflicted, yet he open'd not his Mouth. He is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before the Shearer is dumb, so he open'd not his Mouth. He was taken from Prison and from Judgment, he was cut off out of the Land of the Living, for the Transgression of my People was he stricken.* How punctually these, and many other Prophecies to the same purpose, were fulfill'd in the Person of our Saviour, the History of the New Testament may fully inform us.

2dly, Another Point that St. Paul deliver'd to the *Corinthians*, was his Burial, *How he dy'd for our Sins, and that he was bury'd.* The Rites of Burial, you know, ever attend Death, all Nations interring their deceas'd Friends. Accordingly we read that our Saviour's Body was taken from the Cross, and begg'd by his Disciples, in order to his Burial; that *Mary Magdalen* and others brought Spices to embalm

embalm him ; and that *Joseph of Arimathea* wrapp'd his Body in a clean Linen Cloth, and laid it in his own Tomb, which he had hewn out in the Rock, and roll'd a Stone at the Door of the Sepulchre, as we find it related by all the Evangelists. And this too was according to the Scriptures, that is, agreeable to the Predictions of the Old Testament ; for we find the Prophets foretold his Burial as well as his Death. The Prophet *Isaiah*, who declar'd long before the Particulars of his Death, spake likewise of the Circumstances of his Burial, saying, *He made his Grave with the Wicked, and with the Rich in his Death ;* Isa. 53. 9. *Jonas's* lying *three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly*, hath been look'd upon as a Type of Christ's Burial, or his lying *three Days and three Nights in the heart of the Earth ;* so 'tis interpreted and apply'd, *Mat. 12. 40.*

The Psalmist speaking in the Person of the Messiah, saith, *My Flesh shall rest in Hope ;* which can be understood only of his resting in the Grave in hope of a Resurrection.

And as Christ's Burial was thus foretold by the Prophets in the Old Testament, so was the fulfilling of it as plainly reveal'd by the Apostles in the New. This Truth St. Paul deliver'd to the *Corinthians*, as a thing necessary to be believ'd by them, for the Confirmation of his Death, for Men are not bury'd before they are dead ; and a Preparation for his Resurrection, for Men cannot be said to rise, who were never dead : and a greater Confirmation of his Death we cannot have, than his being deliver'd up to it by his Enemies, and his Body's being laid in the Grave by his Friends. But

The 3^d and great Point of Doctrine the Apostle deliver'd to them, was his Resurrection ; *That he rose again the third Day, according to the Scriptures :* that is, after his Body had lain part of three Days in the Grave, viz. from Friday-Evening to Sunday-Morning, he came to life again, as the Prophets long before foretold of him. This is the Pillar and Groundwork of all our Faith and Hope in him ; and therefore the Apostle spends all the remaining part of this Chapter in asserting and applying this great Article, of which I shall take notice as far as the Epistle for this Day reaches.

Indeed, the Resurrection of Christ gave the greatest Assurance of the Divinity of his Person, of the Certainty of his Doctrine, of the Efficacy of his Death, and of the Truth of his Messiahship. And therefore no Article of
our

our Faith either deserv'd or needed greater Confirmation : in which the Holy Ghost hath not been wanting to our Faith, proving it in this Chapter by sundry sorts of Arguments ; beginning with the Testimony of Eye-witnesses of it, which in a matter of Fact, as this is, is the best and fullest Evidence. Accordingly therefore the Apostle gave these *Corinthians* a Catalogue of those that saw and convers'd with him after he rose from the Dead.

The first whereof here mention'd, is *St. Peter*, who was the first and chiefest of the Apostles ; ver. 5. *He was seen of Cephas* : which was one of the Names of *Peter*. He was first call'd *Simon* the Son of *Jonas*, after by God's Appointment *Cephas*, which is by Interpretation a Stone, John 1. 42. After that, upon his famous Confession of Christ, he was call'd *Peter*, Mat. 19. *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my Church*. To him Christ shew'd himself after his Resurrection ; so we read, Luke 24. 34. *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appear'd unto Simon*. Indeed, the pious Women that embalm'd his Body for the Funeral, had the first news of his being risen ; for they coming to his Sepulchre, and seeing the Stone roll'd away, an Angel appear'd to them, and said, *I know that ye seek Jesus, that was crucify'd ; he is not here, for he is risen : withal calling them to come and see the place where the Lord lay*. Hereupon the Women ran away with the news hereof unto the Disciples, some whereof look'd upon it as an idle Tale, and believ'd it not, Luke 24. 11. But *Peter* arose, and ran to the Sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the Linen Clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering at what was come to pass ; ver. 12. For which reason, 'tis suppos'd, he had the honour of his first Appearance : for we find the Eleven declaring that he was indeed risen, and had appear'd to *Simon*, ver. 34. and *St. Paul* reckons him here as the first that had the sight of him ; *He was seen of Cephas*.

Next, he appear'd to the twelve Disciples or Apostles ; the eleven, saith *Mark*, one of the twelve being then wanting, *Mark* 16. 12. where we read, he appear'd to them as they sat at Meat, and upbraided them with the Backwardness of their Belief ; and because some of them took him for a Spectre or Apparition, and were terrify'd as if they had seen a Spirit, he bid them behold his Hands and his Feet, that it was he himself : *Handle me and see me* (saith he) *for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have*.

And to remove all their Fears, he call'd for Meat, and eat before them.

But *Thomas*, the absent Disciple, would not believe upon the Report of all this, but requir'd a more sensible Demonstration, by seeing the Print of the Nails in his Body, that fasten'd him to the Cross, and by thrusting his Hand into his side, where the Soldier's Spear had pierc'd: to all which Christ graciously condescended for his Satisfaction, saying to him, *Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side, and be not faithless, but believing.* Upon which he was fully satisfy'd of the Truth of his Resurrection, and in the strength of his Faith cry'd out, *My Lord and my God!* as we read, *John 20. 27, 28.*

After this he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater part were alive, and present at that time, but some of them were dead or fallen asleep; as he tells us in the sixth Verse of the Epistle for this Day. Now these five hundred Brethren were those to whom he appear'd in *Galilee*, of whom we read, *Mat. 28. 7, 10.* who all believ'd the Truth of it, and after testify'd it to the World.

After that he was seen of *James*, ver. 7. This *James* was the Brother of our Lord, whom some of the Antients affirm to be constituted Bishop of *Jerusalem* by Christ himself, at this Appearance of his unto him; for which see *St. Jerom*, *Epiphanius*, *St. Chrysostom*, and *Theodoret* on this place.

And last of all (saith *St. Paul*) he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time; ver. 8. meaning, that tho he knew him not before his ascending into Heaven, and so could not see him in the Flesh with the other Apostles, yet after his Ascension he saw him in a Vision; when being converted by him, he vouchsafed to speak to him by a Voice from Heaven, and exhibited himself to his sight, and receiv'd him thro his special Grace and Favour into the number of his Apostles, tho most unworthy of that Dignity: for so he acknowledges in the next Verse, *I am the least of the Apostles, and not meet to be call'd an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God:* that is, his former Rage in persecuting the Church had set him in the Rank of the meanest of the Apostles, and much inferiour to those who were never guilty of so vile an Enormity.

Epistle for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity. 275

However, saith he in the following Verse, *By the Grace of God I am what I am*; and his Grace, which was bestow'd on me, *was not in vain, for I labour'd more abundantly than they all*; yet not I, but the Grace of God which was given me: meaning, that 'twas owing only to the Mercy and Favour of God that he was what he was; and that he endeavour'd to walk worthy of the Grace given to him, and to make a right use of it, which he had so far improv'd, as to be more industrious in the Work of the Gospel than all the other Disciples: which yet he would not in any manner ascribe to himself, but merely to the Grace and Goodness of God, that accompany'd and assisted him in all that he did.

He then sums up what he had before deliver'd to them; *Therefore* (saith he) *whether it were I or they, so we preach'd, and so ye believ'd*: that is, however that matter be, whether you look upon me, to whom Christ appear'd after his Ascension, or on them to whom he appear'd before, you cannot have the least reason to doubt of the Truth of his Resurrection; for we have all preach'd this Doctrine to you, and you have all accordingly receiv'd and embrac'd it. Let none then shake or stagger your Faith in it, but be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, and then your Labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

This is briefly the Sense and Substance of the Epistle for this Day; which by way of Application may serve to direct,

1. The Ministers of Christ, in their delivering the Truths of the Gospel: And,

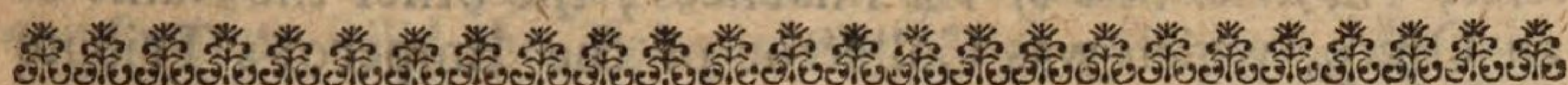
2. The People, in their hearing and receiving of them.

1. I say, St. Paul's delivering to the *Corinthians* all, and nothing but what he had receiv'd, may teach the Ministers of the Gospel not to come short of, nor to go beyond their Commission; but faithfully to declare the whole Will of God, and no more. We see the Apostle conceal'd nothing which he had Authority to deliver; and St. Peter tells us, that *they did not follow or publish any cunningly-devis'd Fables, when they made known the Power and Coming of the Lord Jesus, but were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty*; 2 Pet. 1. 16. And St. John tells us, that *which we have heard and seen, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, that declare we unto you*; 1 John 1. 1, 2. teaching us to be well inform'd and instructed in the Truth of what we deliver,

before we instil or inculcate it upon others, that we may not obtrude upon them any thing contrary to sound Doctrine, nor teach for Doctrine the Inventions or Commandments of Men. Moreover, the Apostles frequent delivering the main Points of Christ's Death, Burial, and Resurrection, may direct us to make the great fundamental Truths of Christianity the chief Subject of our Discourses, to instil those first and necessary Principles into the Minds of the People; that by laying well the Foundation of Religion, they may be the more firmly built up in their most holy Faith.

2. This Epistle directs the People to hear and receive these great Truths; and not only so, but to remember what they have heard and receiv'd of them, and to hold them fast. The Apostle had observ'd some among the *Corinthians*, not only doubting, but even denying some of these great Articles, and wavering from the Faith which they had before learnt and receiv'd: this made him ask the question, *How say some among you, there is no Resurrection?* as if they were fallen away from the Faith which they had once embrac'd, and thereby cast off all Thoughts and Care of a future Life; saying with the Epicure, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* These he rebukes in the following words; *Be not deceiv'd* (saith he) *such evil Communications* not only destroy the Faith, but *corrupt good Manners.* For they that think they shall die like Beasts, will be easily persuaded to live like such: by which means they will be for ever depriv'd of that Happiness, which they would not believe and prepare for; and likewise eternally feel that Misery, which they would not fear and prevent. Wherefore,

Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, and let not Satan or the World tempt us to Inconstancy, and cause us to fall from our own Stedfastness. In a word, as the Ministers of Christ are to preach and dispense to the People the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, so are the People to give diligent heed to what they hear, to treasure it up in their Memories, to stand firm to it, and to make it the Rule and Measure of all their Actions; so shall both e'er long be happy in so doing, and receive the End of their Faith, even the Salvation of their Souls: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXXIII.

The GOSPEL for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

St. Luke xviii. 9——15.

Jesus spake this Parable unto certain, which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despis'd others : Two Men went up into the Temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank thee that I am not as other Men, &c.

THE Gospel for this Day sets forth, in a Parable, the right Way and Manner of praying unto God, and the certain good Success that will ensue upon the due performing of it ; as also a wrong way of addressing to him, too often used, with the bad Issue and Unsuccessfulness thereof.

It begins thus, *Jesus spake this Parable to certain, which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despis'd others.* By which it appears, that this Parable is design'd to check the Vanity of such as have too high an Opinion of their own Sanctity, and boast of a purer Way of Worship, join'd with a Contempt of those that go not after their way.

Who they are, the Explication of the Parable will after shew us : *Two Men went up into the Temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican.* Where we are to observe the Persons that went up, and they were a *Pharisee* and a *Publican* ; the Place to which they went, and that was to the Temple ; and the End or Errand upon which they went, and that was to pray : All which may be worth our Observation.

For the Persons, they were a *Pharisee* and a *Publican* ; the one the Name of a Sect, call'd in the Acts of the Apostles,

278 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the
stles, *The strict Sect of the Pharisees*; the other the Name of
an Office, which was Collector of the Emperor's Tribute
and Customs.

The *Pharisees* were so call'd from their Separation, for they separated both from the Civil and Religious Conversation of other Men: they look'd upon themselves as the only heavenly Men, and kept a distance from others as Men of the Earth; calling themselves Saints, and all others Sinners. They blamed our Saviour for eating with *Publicans* and Sinners, with whom they would have no fellowship, no not to eat. *This Man receiveth Sinners* (saith one of them) *and eateth with them*. If he were a Prophet (saith another) *he would know who or what manner of Woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a Sinner*. They affected a pompous Show of external Purity and Holiness, and were at great pains to polish the outward Garb, without any regard how it was within. They were mighty careful of washing the Outside of Pots, Cups, and Dishes, yea and of themselves too, when they came from Markets and Places of publick Concourse, to take off all imaginary Defilement. In short, these were the Persons here mention'd by our Saviour, *who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despis'd others*.

On the other hand, the *Publicans* were Officers appointed to gather the Tribute-Mony, and other Revenues of the Emperor; which they often did with that Rigour and Oppression, that render'd them odious to the People, and were therefore generally rank'd with Sinners and Heathens. However, our Saviour call'd some of these from the *Publicans* Stall to be his Disciples and Followers. *Matthew* obey'd his Call, and left all and follow'd him; and from the Receit of Custom became a Receiver of his Doctrine, and an Attendant on his Person. *Zaccheus*, another *Publican*, restor'd fourfold; and from an Exactor of Tribute, became an Example of Righteousness. Of this sort was the *Publican* here mention'd; where by the *Pharisee* is meant a precise Jew or Secretary, by the *Publican* a Convert or penitent Sinner. These were the two Persons that went up: From whence I proceed;

Secondly, To the Place to which they went up, and that was to the Temple; *Two Men went up into the Temple*. It seems this *Pharisee*, whatever he was at other times, was no Separatist here; for he went up with the *Publican* to the
the

Gospel for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity. 279

the Temple, the proper Place of publick Prayer : for so our Saviour stil'd the Temple *the House of Prayer*, saying, *My House is a House of Prayer*, set apart for that purpose; call'd therefore *God's House*, because dedicated to him, where he hath promis'd to meet, hear, and bless his People, and to *make them joyful in his House of Prayer*. I was glad (saith David) when they said unto me, *Come let us go up to the House of God*; our Feet shall stand in thy Gates, O Jerusalem. He rejoic'd to see the People unanimously repair to the Temple, the publick Place of God's Worship; and for himself he tells us, that the Love or Zeal of God's House had even eaten him up : so much delighted was he in the Temple of God, the Place where his Honour dwells. In the New Testament we find the Apostles daily in the Temple, blessing and praising God; Luke 24. 53. Yea, we find our Blessed Saviour constantly repairing to Jerusalem, at the appointed Times of publick Worship; where he frequented the Temple and Synagogues set apart for that end : yea, so zealous was he for the Honour and Reverence of the Temple, that he whip'd out the Buyers and Sellers, as Profaners of it; saying, *My House is a House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves*.

The Temple then, or the Church, is the proper Place of publick Worship, where we are commanded to resort, if we hope to be heard, or to receive a Blessing; for those publick Places are by God's Appointment and Approbation set apart from common Uses, and consecrated for his Service, and being thus devoted to him, become *holy unto the Lord*.

Now this may plainly convince us of the Error and Obstinacy of such Persons, as prefer a Barn, a Stable, or any private House, before the Church or House of God; and leave the consecrated Places of divine Worship, for the Places of Traffick and Merchandize, where beside other Fraud and Deceit, there are found those who *deceive the Hearts of the Simple, and make merchandize of unstable Souls*. St. Paul distinguishes between Houses to eat and drink in, and the Church of God to worship and pray in; saying, *Have ye not Houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the Church of God?* 1 Cor. 11. 22. And certainly it must be a great Contempt of God's House, to frequent unconsecrated Places before it : yea, the same Apostle describes false Teachers by their *creeping into private Houses, and there leading captive silly Women*, 2 Tim. 3. 6. Holy David pre-
fer'd

fer'd one Day in God's House before a thousand elsewhere, and had rather be a Door-keeper in the House of God, than be found in the Tents of Ungodliness. And surely a greater Blessing may be reasonably expected in the publick Assemblies of God's People, than in the private Meetings and Conventicles of Sectaries: which should teach us to frequent the publick Places of Divine Worship, and to forsake the private Nurseries of Discord and Division. This for the Place.

They went up to the *Temple*, but for what End? Why, it was to pray: the next thing to be consider'd. Both the *Pharisee* and the *Publican* went to the same Place, and upon the same Errand, to offer up their Prayers and Devotions unto God: and a good Errand it was, to meet together to pay their Duty and Homage to their Maker, and in the proper Place design'd and dedicated to that Service. But how did each of them perform it? The Answer to that will lead us, in the next place, to consider,

The different Make and Manner of their Prayers. And here indeed the difference between them was very great: for the *Pharisee's* Prayer was attended with Prolixity, Pride, and Hypocrisy; the *Publican's* with Brevity, Humility, and Sincerity. Which things make a vast difference both in the Nature, End, and Issue of their Prayers, as the following Words of the Parable will plainly declare.

The Pharisee stood up and pray'd: here, by the way, his standing up and praying shew'd some Reverence, and upbraids the rude and unmannerly Devotion of many in our days, who sit at their Prayers, and shew less Reverence in their Approaches unto God, than will be allow'd in their Addresses unto Men.

But to go on; *The Pharisee stood up, and pray'd thus with himself, God I thank thee, that I am not as other Men, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican, &c.* Where he spins out his Prayer into length and multitude of words, and with Reflections too more on others than himself, measuring and extolling his own Goodness by others Badness. His long Prayer is not indeed set forth in Words at length, but only the Heads upon which he enlarg'd himself: he thank'd God, not so much for his Mercies, as for his own Merits, that he was not so bad as other Men, *Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers*, and the like: wherein he reflected upon the *Publicans*, who were commonly charg'd with those Faults, from which he boasted him-

self

Gospel for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity. 281

self to be free; and the following words, *Or even as this Publican*, plainly shew whom he had an eye at. Indeed he was not as this *Publican*; for the *Publican's* Carriage and Prayer, and the Success of it too, was much better, as we shall see after.

At present we may observe, 1st, That the *Pharisee's* Prayers were often remark'd, but never commended for their Length; they enlarg'd their Prayers as they did their Phylacteries, and ran out their Petitions into many Words and vain Repetitions; therein imitating the Heathens, and thinking to be heard for their long Prayers, as they did for their much speaking. And herein they are but too much imitated by the Tautologies and vain Repetitions used in Prayer by many in our days.

2^{dly}, The *Pharisee's* Prayer was attended not with Prolixity only, but with abundance of Pride; for he enlarges himself upon the Topicks of his own Righteousness, and instead of being sensible of his Unworthiness, sets forth his Worth, and magnifies his own Perfections: he does not beg of God more Grace, but seems to tell him that he had enough already; and when he should ask pardon for his Sins, thanks God that there was no need of it. He compares himself with others, not to humble, but to exalt himself: and instead of preferring another, or esteeming others better than himself, he proclaims his own Excellencies, and prefers himself above all; *I am not as other Men*, saith he, meaning, that he was much better, being free from many heinous Crimes, that they may be charg'd withal. He was no *Extortioner*, if we will believe himself; tho our Saviour, who knew his Heart, tells us, that within the *Pharisees* were full of Extortion and Excess, *Mat. 23. 25*. He was no *unjust* Person, tho charg'd in the same Chapter with Rapine and Oppression. No *Adulterer*, tho he could creep into Houses, and lead captive silly Women, laden with divers Lusts, whom he despoil'd both of their Substance and Vertue together. Particularly, he despises the poor *Publican*, as one stain'd with all these things, and so not fit to be named or compar'd with him.

And as he thus boasted of his Freedom from the Vices of other Men, so did he glory in his own Vertues: *I fast* (saith he) *twice in the Week*; that is, on the second and fifth Day of the Week, which are our Monday and Thursday, when they had the Law expounded to them in their Synagogues. *I give Tithes* (saith he) *of all that I possess:*
in

in which they were very punctual, even to the *Tithing of Mint, Annise, and Cummin*. These things our Saviour commended in them, tho he blam'd their omitting of other weightier Matters of the Law, saying, *These things ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone*. Their Care and Conscience herein, justly condemns the Robbery and Sacrilege, committed in these Matters by many Christians. In short, the *Pharisee* prides himself here, not only that he was not so great a Sinner as others, but that he was a greater Saint, and arriv'd to a higher Pitch of Holiness than they: a second Fault of his Prayer.

3dly, The *Pharisee's* Prayer was attended with Hypocrisy, the greatest Flaw and Blemish of all. This our Saviour proves at large, throughout the whole 23d Chapter of *St. Matthew*, where he shews their long Prayers and their long Robes, to be only a covering for their Injustice and Extortion; who by their greater Pretences of Piety, made a prey of the Simple, and devour'd Widow's Houses. He compares them to whited Sepulchres, that appear'd fair and beautiful without, but within were full of Rotteness and Corruption; and though they took care to wash the Out-side of the Cup and Platter, yet they matter'd not how foul and stutish it was within; their Fastings, Prayers, and Alms were all to be seen of Men, and the whole Design of them was not so much directed to the Glory of God, as to promote their own. Of this kind was the *Pharisee's* Prayer here, which we see was attended with Prolixity, Pride, and Hypocrisy.

The *Publican's* Prayer, on the other hand, was accompanied with the much better Qualifications of Humility, Brevity, and Sincerity; for *he standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his Eyes towards Heaven, but smote on his Breast, saying, God be merciful to me a Sinner*. Where we may observe,

(1.) The Humility of his Prayer, he *stood afar off*, as thinking himself unworthy to draw nigh to so sacred a Majesty. He had scarce Confidence *so much as to lift up his Eyes unto Heaven*, against which he had sinned; but shew'd the greatest Contrition and Indignation against himself for what he had done. *He smote upon his Breast*, as conscious of the Evil he had harbour'd there; all Tokens of great Modesty, and a profound Humility, the first and main Ingredient of an acceptable Prayer. Accordingly, we find this to be the Guise and Practice of good Men in all Ages:

Jacob

Gospel for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity. 283

Jacob thought himself less than the least of all God's Mercies; Job humbled himself even in Dust and Ashes; David acknowledg'd himself a Worm, and no Man; St. Paul styles himself, the Chiefest of Sinners; and the Publican addresses here, not with any Opinion of his own Worth, but with a deep Sense of his own Unworthiness.

(2.) We may observe, the Brevity and Shortness of the *Publican's Prayer*, which consisted only of these few words, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*; wherein he follow'd *Solomon's Direction*, that in our addressing unto God, *our Words should be few*, Eccles. 5.2. Our Saviour caution'd his Disciples against the *long Prayers* of the Pharisees, and the *vain Repetitions* of the Heathens, who thought to be heard for their much speaking; Mat. 6. where to prevent such Tautologies, Christ gave his Disciples a short Form, known by the Name of the Lord's Prayer. And as his Precept was such, so was his Practice according; for in his Agony, when he was praying, as it were for Life, he us'd only these few words; *Father, If it be possible let this Cup pass from me*: which Request he put up three times upon that Occasion in the same words. The Disciples in the Storm had no longer Prayer in that extreme Exigence than this, *Lord save us, we perish*; Mat. 8. 25. The blind Man in the Gospel, follow'd our Saviour with this short Prayer, *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me*; Luke 18. 38. that was all his Prayer, which he repeated several times, with great Earnestness and Importunity. And here the poor *Publican* pours out his Soul in this short Form and Collect, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*: And indeed, such short pious Ejaculations, darted out of a devout Heart, fly higher, and pierce deeper, than the longer Harangues of the Hypocrite. And this will lead me to the

Last, Though not the least Ingredient of the *Publican's Prayer*, and that was Sincerity; imply'd in these few hearty words, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*: which proceeded not from the Flatteries of the Tongue, but from the inward Longings of a devout Heart. Instead of insisting upon his own Righteousness, he acknowledges his own Vileness; and when the *Pharisee* look'd upon himself as a Saint, this poor *Publican* owns himself a Sinner: He does not with the proud *Pharisee* thank God, that he was better than other Men, but reckons and ranks himself among the worst of them; and instead of boasting of his Merits,

284 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

Merits, only begs for Mercy, and casts himself wholly upon it: all which are Signs of great Sincerity.

Thus we see the Difference between the *Pharisee's* and the *Publican's* Prayer: the one was long, proud, and arrogant; the other short, humble, and sincere.

But what was the Event or Issue of their Prayers? Why, that was very different too, as the next and last words declare; *I tell you, this Man went down to his House justified rather than the other*: that is, the humble Suit of the poor *Publican* found better Success and Acceptance with God, than the conceited Vaunts of the proud *Pharisee*; the one was absolv'd from his Sins, and receiv'd into Favour; the other had the Guilt of them remaining upon him, and both his Person and Performances were utterly rejected. He that justify'd himself was condemn'd, and he that condemn'd himself was justify'd before God: for which this reason is added in the Close; *For every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted*. This Conclusion our Saviour draws from the foregoing Parable, and is indeed the standing Rule of Divine Providence; which putteth down the Haughty from their Seat, and exalteth the Humble and Meek. *God resisteth the Proud* (saith St. Peter) *and giveth Grace only to the Humble*. The proud Person sets himself against God; he offers Sacrifice to himself, and seeks more his own Praise, than the Honour of his Maker; and this must set God against him, who will not be rival'd by his Creatures, or give his Glory to another, and is therefore concern'd to humble the Proud and Arrogant, and to vindicate his own Honour by their Abasement: Whereas the Lowly and the Humble, that give God all the Glory, and take nothing to themselves but the Shame of their own Misdoings, will surely be exalted by him, and rise the higher in his Opinion, by being low in their own; for *them that honour me* (saith he) *I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteem'd*: 1 Sam. 2. 30. Neither is the proud Man less hateful to Men, than he is to God; both of them agreeing to pull down the haughty and assuming, and to shew Kindness to the meek and lowly in Heart.

This is the Sum of the Gospel for this Day; which shews the Qualifications of an acceptable and successful Prayer: and they consist not in the Length or Variety of Words, but in the Sincerity and Humility of the Heart. The proud
Pharisee

Gospel for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity. 285

Pharisee (we see) was rather hated than heard for his arrogant and much speaking: but the poor *Publican*, for his short, modest, and humble Prayer, found a gracious Acceptance; the one went away condemn'd for his Self-conceit, the other went home justify'd for his Self-condemning: Which may teach us to mind chiefly the good Disposition of our Soul, and not to affect Length or Vanity in our Addresses unto God; for these things are neither necessary nor becoming in our Approaches to the Divine Majesty. He is not to be inform'd by any Words, as Men must be; for he knows our Necessities before we ask: He is not to be persuaded by many Words, as Men are; for he is void of all Passions, and so cannot be mov'd or wrought upon that way: nor is he to be pleas'd with new Words, as vain Men are wont to be; for he is a pure and perfect Mind, and so far above all the little Gratifications of Fancy and Imagination. That which God principally looks to, is the Heart, to find that inflam'd with the Love of him, and strong Desires of his Mercy and Pardon; and where that is, a few hearty words will serve the turn, and prevail for both.

In short then, this Parable may teach us, 1. To frequent the Temple, Church, or Publick Places of Divine Worship, set apart and consecrated for that purpose; not creeping into Houses, nor following the separate Meetings of Sectaries and Seducers, which breed Strife and Confusion, and every evil Work; but to assemble and meet together in God's House, where he hath promis'd to meet and bless us: and that will tend to beget Love and Charity, and best manifest our Union and Communion with one another.

2. In all our Addresses to God, let us hence learn to subdue all Pride and Loftiness of Heart, and to approach him with all Humility and Lowliness both of Body and Mind. To shew our bodily Reverence, let us do it by standing or kneeling, not by sitting at Prayers, as the manner of some is, who herein shew more Rudeness and Irreverence to their Maker, than they are wont to do before a Magistrate. For the Reverence and Humility of the Mind, let us shew it by our mean and low Thoughts of our selves; and instead of boasting with the proud *Pharisee*, that we are better than other Men, let us rank our selves among the worst, and say with the poor *Publican*, *Lord, be merciful to me a Sinner.*



DISCOURSE XXXIV.

The EPISTLE for the Twelfth Sunday after
Trinity.

2 Cor. iii. 4—10.

*Such Trust have we through Christ to God-ward:
not that we are sufficient of our selves to think
any thing as of our selves; but our Sufficiency is
of God, who also hath made us able Ministers of
the New Testament, &c.*

THE Service for this Day puts us in mind of God Almighty's great Readiness to hear our Prayers, and to give more than we can desire or deserve; and from thence teaches us to implore the Abundance of his Mercy, for the Pardon of our Sins, and the pouring out of his Graces upon us. To which end,

The Epistle for the Day speaks of putting our Trust in God thro Jesus Christ: *Such Trust* (saith the Apostle) *have we thro Christ to God-ward*; which words relate chiefly to the Fidelity of the Apostles in the Work of the Ministry, and the Success they had thereby, which they look'd upon as their greatest Glory, and needed no other Commendation; not arrogating any thing of it to themselves, but ascribing all to the Power and Grace of God: for in the next words he acknowledges their utter Insufficiency to think or do any good thing of themselves; saying, *Not that we are sufficient of our selves to think any thing as of our selves*: To which he adds God Almighty's All-sufficiency to help them; *But our Sufficiency is of God*. Which they found in the Exercise of a Ministration far beyond that of *Moses*, as the Sequel of this Epistle will make plainly appear.

The first and great Lesson here taught us is our utter Insufficiency to think or do any good thing of our selves, in these words, *Not that we are sufficient of our selves to think any thing as of our selves*; and if not to think, sure
not

Epistle for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity. 287

not to do any good thing by our own Power: which made the Apostle ask the Question, *Who is sufficient for these things?* implying our natural Impotence and Inability to every good Word or Work. This is evident from many Passages in Holy Scripture, and likewise from many Examples of human Frailty recorded therein: to which we may add our own woful Experience for a Proof and Confirmation of this sad Truth.

The Holy Scriptures abound with Expressions that set forth this our great Impotence and Inability. *Without me* (saith our Saviour) *ye can do nothing*; John 15. 5. *I can do nothing of my self*, saith the great Apostle St. Paul: And if that great Champion of the Faith were so sensible of his own Weakness, how much more ought we to own and lament our greater Impotence? We can call nothing our own, but our Infirmities and Imperfections: all the rest is freely given us of God, *in whom we live, move, and have our Being*; and who worketh in us both *to will and to do*, according to his good Pleasure.

Moreover, The many Instances of human Frailty recorded in Scripture may abundantly convince us of this Insufficiency. *David*, when left to himself, fell into great Enormities, even to the committing the crying Sins of Murder and Adultery, which cost him a sore and sad Repentance. *St. Peter* shamefully deny'd his Master after many Promises and Protestations to the contrary, which made him weep very bitterly; and may be a warning to all, that think of standing, to take heed lest they fall. *St. Paul* confess'd that in him, that is, in his Flesh, there dwelt no good thing. And if we consult our own sad Experience, we shall find, that we are not sufficient of our selves so much as to think a good Thought, and much less to perform any good Action.

But whence comes this utter Impotence and Inability to all Good? Why, this proceeds partly from the original Corruption and Depravedness of our Nature, contracted by the Fall of our first Parents; and partly from the evil Suggestions and Temptations of our ghostly Enemies.

First, I say, this proceeds from the original Corruption and Depravedness of our Nature, contracted by the Fall of our first Parents. This is the first and great Cause of all the Impiety and Imbecility of Mankind; *How weak is thine Heart* (saith God) *seeing thou hast done these things?* Ezek.

16. 30. Indeed *God made Man at first upright*, and endow'd him with Faculties sufficient to enable him to do his Will; but he hath *perverted his Way, and sought out many Inventions*: Eccles. 7. 29. Our first Parents, by disobeying their Maker, lost both their Strength and their Innocence together, and have deriv'd down Weakness and Misery to their Posterity ever since. This brought Darkness into our Minds, Crookedness into our Wills, Disorder into our Affections, and thereby an Impotence upon the whole Man: And hence it comes to pass, that we are not sufficient of our selves to think any thing that is good; *the Imaginations of the Heart*, in this degenerate State, being *evil, only evil, and that continually*. Again,

Secondly, This proceeds partly from the evil Suggestions and Temptations of our spiritual Enemies; who, working upon the Corruption of our Nature, encrease our Weakness, and render us both unwilling and unable to do any thing as we ought: These daily assault and solicit us to Sin, plying us with their Temptations, whereby they impair our Strength, and create this Impotence. Satan, the great Enemy of Mankind, hath his Wiles, his Devices, and his fiery Darts to wound and weaken us. The World hath Baits and Snares to allure and entrap us; both which are too apt to prevail upon us, and render us too feeble to resist or conquer them. Beside which, we have an Enemy in our Bosom that is still ready to join issue with the two former; *the Flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh*: by which our Strength is mightily weaken'd and impair'd in the Combat; insomuch that we may all say with *St. Paul*, The Good that we would do, we do not, and the Evil that we would not, that we do: which is sufficient to convince us of our utter Inability to think or do any thing that is good of our selves.

But what Remedy have we in this Case, or how may we be reliev'd under this Impotence? Why, that the next words tell us, *Our Sufficiency is of God*. We are not left helpless, to sink under the Burden of our Infirmities, but we have a Door of Hope open'd for us, and are succour'd by a Divine Hand: for tho we are insufficient of our selves, yet *our Sufficiency is of God*; and we are assisted by him who is all-sufficient, and can do more than we can ask or think. Of this Sufficiency we have abundant Proof from Scripture, from Example, and from our own Experience. The
Lord

Epistle for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity. 289

Lord himself told St. Paul, that his Grace was sufficient for him, and that his Strength was made perfect in Weakness; 2 Cor. 12. 9. This made him tell the Corinthians, that God was able so to make all Grace abound towards them, that they always having all Sufficiency in all things, might abound to every good Work; 2 Cor. 9. 8. Hence we find the Apostle declaring, that tho he could do nothing of himself, yet he could do all things through Christ that strengthened him; Phil. 4. 13. And though he could do nothing against the Truth, yet he could do or suffer any thing for it; 2 Cor. 13. 8. His Weakness was turn'd into Strength; and he who was not sufficient to think or do a good thing, was able to perform the hardest Task, and nothing was impossible to him. And to this the Experience of good Christians can set their Seals, who have found greatest Assistance in times of greatest Exigence, and have been thereby enabled to act not only above their Hopes, but beyond their Strength.

But whence is this Sufficiency? Why, the Text tell us, 'tis of God; 'tis not of our selves, who have nothing but Impotence and Infirmities to boast of: but 'tis of God, who hath All-sufficiency in himself, and is willing to impart what is sufficient for us. All our natural Powers, whereby we perform any natural Action, are wholly from him; for he giveth us Life, and Breath, and all things. And all the supernatural Aids and Assistances of Divine Grace, whereby we do any spiritual and acceptable Service to him, are more especially and entirely his; which is the Sufficiency here principally intended, whereby our natural Parts and Powers are rais'd to higher degrees of spiritual Strength in God's Service, than of themselves they could arrive to.

And to this the Apostle here chiefly refers, in saying, *Our Sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able Ministers of the New Testament*: meaning, that by the Power of Divine Grace they were assisted in the Work of the Ministry, and enabled to do greater things for the Conversion of Souls, than could be done without it. 'Tis this that makes the Man of God perfect, and thorowly furnish'd for every good Word and Work: by which we likewise are made *able Ministers of the New Testament*; that is, of the New Covenant made with us in Christ, in contradistinction to the Legal Covenant deliver'd by Moses: of which New Covenant we are, by the Ability that God hath given us, the Preachers and Dispensers; *not of the Letter*, which consists only in the Words or Writing, without any inward

Virtue or Efficacy upon the Soul; *but of the Spirit*, which is attended with the Influence of the Holy Ghost, imprinting it upon the Heart, and working in the Soul all the Grace and Vertue propounded and promised in it. *For the Letter killeth* (saith he) that is, the first Covenant, that was written on Tables of Stone, cannot save a Sinner, but rather denounces Wrath, and serves to aggravate his Condemnation. *The Law worketh Death* (saith St. Paul) and *by it no Flesh living can be justified*. But the Spirit giveth Life; that is, the New Covenant, by the Aids and Assistances of God's Holy Spirit, giveth Life, and not only so, but preserves and maintains it by the continual Comfort and Communication of Divine Grace.

From hence the Apostle takes occasion to shew the difference between the Legal and Evangelical Dispensation, together with the Glory and Excellency of the latter above the former; calling the one, *The Ministration of Death and Condemnation*; the other, *The Ministration of the Spirit and Righteousness*: advancing the Glory of the one above the other as far as Life exceeds Death, and the Consolations of the Spirit the Miseries of Condemnation. *If the Ministration of Death* (saith he) *that was written and engraven in Stones, was glorious, so that the Children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the Face of Moses, for the Glory of his Countenance, which Glory was to be done away; how shall not the Ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?* Where he allows some sort of Glory, and that in no small degree, to the Delivery of the Law, which brought nothing but Death with it: for its being engraven on Tables of Stone by the Finger of God himself, and adorn'd with the Appearance of Angels at the Delivery of it, and likewise with such a bright shining Light, which cast such a Splendor on Moses's Face, that dazzled the Eyes of the Beholders, could not but add a Glory to it; tho that Glory was but transient, and to be done away. From whence the Apostle justly infers, that if that lower Dispensation, which was only written on Stone, and externally represented good things, without affording any inward Grace or Strength to attain to them, had yet such a Glory attending the publishing of it; how much more glorious and illustrious must the Dispensation of the Gospel be, which is establish'd upon better Promises, with an additional Strength to perform the Conditions, and to obtain the Mercy granted in them? For, as he goes on,

Epistle for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity. 291

If the Administration of Condemnation be Glory, much more doth the Ministration of Righteousness exceed in Glory: meaning, that if the Law, which ministred only to Condemnation and Death, had such an outward Glory to usher it in, and to set it off; how much more doth the Gospel, which ministreth to Life and Salvation, surpass it in true and permanent Glory?

This is briefly the Sum and Sense of this Day's Epistle; which we may easily improve into the following Lessons.

1. Our great Weakness and Inability to do any thing of our selves, may serve to check all Pride and Presumption, and to keep us from trusting too much to our own Strength. He that relies upon his own Power, leans but upon a broken Reed, which will certainly fail and deceive him. *David*, a Man after God's own Heart, and *Peter*, the chiefest of the Apostles, found the Truth hereof by sad Experience; for both presuming too far upon their own Strength, betray'd their own Weakness, and shamefully fell into foul Enormities. Which great Examples may teach us to beware of too much Confidence in our selves, or relying too far upon our own Sufficiency: especially we of the Ministry should take heed of depending too much upon our own Parts in the Discharge of our Office, but rather implore the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit; and instead of running before we are sent, to say with the Apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

2. As the Sense of our Insufficiency should keep us from Presumption; so should the Sense of the Sufficiency we have from God preserve us from Despair: for tho we are unable to think or do any thing of our selves, yet *his Grace is sufficient for us*; and *we can do all things through Christ that strengthens us*; who is never wanting to the hearty Desires and Endeavours of his People: for he is ever more ready to hear us, than we are to pray to him; and the Returns of his Goodness far exceed both our Desires and Deserts. So that as we may not presume upon our own Power, which is no better than Weakness; so neither are we to despair of Divine Grace and Assistance, which is abundantly able to supply all Defects, and to help all our Infirmities, and consequently may at all times, in the Use of good Means, be safely trusted to, and rely'd upon.

3. This Discourse may teach us to banish all vain Conceit of Merit, and to ascribe all that we have, are, or can

do, entirely to the Divine Bounty: for if all our Sufficiency be of God, then we are nothing of our selves, and consequently can merit nothing at God's hands; for he that can do nothing, can deserve nothing: his Grace is altogether free and undeserv'd; we have nothing we can call our own, but our Infirmities and Imperfections, which are rather to be bewail'd than boasted of. A due sense hereof may qualify us to receive this Divine Grace, but an arrogant Conceit of our own Worth and Self-sufficiency will certainly deprive us of it; for *God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace only to the Humble.*

4. If all our Sufficiency be of God, then let us thankfully own from whence we receive it, and duly employ what we have in his Service. This is the End of all the Gifts and Graces bestow'd upon us, that we should use them to the Honour of God that gave them, and the Good of them for whose sake they were given: by so doing we shall not only procure a Blessing upon what we have, but find the Favour of obtaining more. He in the Parable, that employ'd his Talents well, improv'd them to great advantage, and gain'd more; but the wicked and unprofitable Servant, that hid his Talent in a Napkin, and made no use of it, was depriv'd of what he had; and instead of entring into his Master's Joy, was doom'd to endless and unspeakable Misery.

5. Since this Sufficiency is deriv'd to us by the Gospel-Covenant, we learn the Excellency and Benefit of it above the Legal Dispensation. The Law exacted Duty, but afforded no Strength to perform it; it requir'd perfect and universal Obedience to all its Precepts, and pronounc'd a Curse upon every one that continu'd not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law, to do them; but gave no power to keep, nor any Pardon for the Breach of them: for which reason the Letter of the Law is said to *kill*, and the Law it self to be a *Ministration of Death and Condemnation*; because it left Men in a hopeless and helpless State, without any Remedy or Relief. Whereas the Gospel, on the other hand, not only requires Duty, but promises Grace to assist and enable to the Performance of it; and therefore as the Law is stil'd *The Letter*, so the Gospel is stil'd *The Spirit*: the one is said to *kill*, call'd therefore a *dead Letter*; the other to *give Life*, call'd therefore *The Ministration of the Spirit and Righteousness*. In short, the Gospel relieves us from the Curse and Sentence of the Law, by the sancti-
fying

Gospel for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity. 293

fyng Grace and Assistances of the Holy Spirit; it requires no more than it gives Strength to perform; it accepts of Sincerity instead of perfect Obedience: and if we happen to fall by a Temptation, it helps us to rise again by Repentance.

And therefore we should bless God for making this New Covenant, and taking us under this easy and gracious Dispensation: *We are not under the Law (saith St. Paul) but under Grace*; for which we have great reason to thank God, and to make a right Use of it.

Lastly, Since all our Sufficiency is of God, we are taught where to seek it, and how to find it in time of need; and that is, by having recourse unto God by Prayer, who hath promis'd to give Wisdom to them that ask it, and Grace to them that lack and desire it: To him therefore let our Prayers and Praises be directed, who is able and willing to do more for us than we can ask or think. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XXXV.

The GOSPEL for the Twelfth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Mark vii. 31, to the end.

Jesus departing from the Coasts of Tyre and Sidon, came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the Coasts of Decapolis; and they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an Impediment in his Speech, &c.

THE Subject of this Gospel is a Relation of a Miracle wrought by our Saviour on the Person of a certain deaf and dumb Man, who was miraculously heal'd of both his Infirmities: In which we may observe,

First, Something going before it.
Secondly, The Miracle it self. And,
Thirdly, What followed after it.

First, As for what went before; 'tis an account of his Progress, or moving from one place to another, to exercise and exert his Divine Power and Goodness for the Welfare of Mankind: So we read here, that *he departed from the Coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and came to the Sea of Galilee, passing through the Coasts of Decapolis*; and elsewhere we read of his going to *Capernaum*, to *Cesarea*, to the Sea of *Tiberias*, and to many other places on the same Errand. This *St. Luke* expresses by his going about doing good, *Acts* 10. 38. where we read of *Jesus of Nazareth's being anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with Power, and his going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil; for God was with him*. He did not confine his Kindness to one Place, or shut up himself by a grave Retirement and Sequestration from the World; but went from place to place, freely conversing and doing good to the Bodies and Souls of Men. His Charity was universal, and extended to all Persons and Places where he came. This was the chief Business of his Life, to go up and down doing good; and where he did not find, he sought out Objects of his Kindness and Compassion, doing for them more than they could wish, or hope for themselves. He travel'd not only thro the Country of *Judaea*, but all the Regions round about, scattering every where the Influences of his Bounty and Goodness: Instances hereof are many and great in the Histories of the four Evangelists, who have left upon Record his excellent Sayings and Instructions for the Welfare of Mens Souls, together with the various Kindnesses shew'd to their Bodies, and both with a Charity and Goodness not to be parallel'd; as may be seen throughout the whole four Gospels.

This we observe from Christ's *departing from the Coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and coming to Galilee through the Coasts of Decapolis*; which *St. Mark* relates here as previous to the Miracle there done by him. And this will lead me,

Secondly, To the Miracle it self; which the following words declare to us: Christ being there, *they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an Impediment in his Speech*. This was generally the Course and Custom of the People in all Places where he came, to bring to him all diseased Persons, and such as were possessed with evil Spirits: so *St. Matthew* tells us, *Chap. 4. 24, 25. His Fame went throughout*

out all Syria, and they brought unto him all sick People, that were taken with divers Diseases and Torments, and those that were possessed with Devils, and those that were lunatick, and those that had the Palsy, and he healed them. And there followed him great Multitudes of People from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and Judæa, and from beyond Jordan. They brought to him a Paralytick, and many possess'd with evil Spirits at Capernaum; they brought Lepers and Lunaticks to him at Cesarea; and in all Parts and Places of his Progress were brought to him the Lame, and the Blind, and the Sick of all manner of Maladies to be heal'd by him. Here, in the Text, they brought to him *one that was deaf, and had an Impediment in his Speech*; by which is meant not barely a stammering Speech, but one totally dumb or speechless; for so the word here and in other places is us'd to signify. The Diseases then here to be cur'd were either a natural Deafness and Dumbness in one that was so born, or adventitious in one that was possess'd with a deaf and dumb Spirit; both which were incurable by any natural or ordinary Means.

But what was it they besought our Saviour for him? Why, that the next words declare; *They beseech him to put his Hand upon him*: which they did, from the many Examples they had seen and heard of his curing many distemper'd Persons merely by a Touch; so he cur'd Peter's Wife's Mother of a Fever, only by touching her Hand: he heal'd a Leper in Galilee by a Touch of his Hand; with many others recorded in Holy Scripture. Yea, we read of one that was heal'd by touching the Hem of his Garment; and of others who, by sending Handkerchiefs and Linen-Clothes, and receiving them back again touch'd by him, were heal'd of divers Diseases, and the evil Spirits went out of them. These things encourag'd the People of Galilee to beseech him to put his Hand upon this deaf and dumb Man: upon which, as the following words declare, *He took him aside from the Multitude, and put his Fingers into his Ears, and he spit and touched his Tongue.*

So ready was he to do good upon the least Motion, he needed no Importunity, nor was he drawn to it by any earnest or frequent Repetition of the Suit, but readily answer'd the Request, and chearfully embrac'd the Opportunity of shewing Kindness; 'twas his Meat and Drink, his Business and Delight too, to do the Will of God, and to do good Offices unto Men: it was his greatest pleasure (as

one hath observ'd) to spread his healing Wings over all, to dispense his benign Influences and Favours every where, and to make every one that came near him sensible of his good Will to Mankind. Tho he was throng'd after and press'd upon by the Miserable and Unfortunate, the Dis-eas'd and Possess'd in all Places where he came, yet we never find any Person sent from his Presence dissatisfy'd. It was but ask and have; and the bare saying, *Lord, have mercy upon me*, was enough to get the poor Beggar's Wants, of what kind soever, instantly supply'd. So it was here, they did but ask him to put his Hand upon this deaf and dumb Person, and he immediately took him aside, to avoid all Vanity and Ostentation, and put his Fingers into his Ears, and touch'd his Tongue. After which, *looking up to Heaven*, owning the paramount Power of his Father, and imploring his Blessing, he look'd down, and sighing at the Infirmities of the poor Man, said unto him, *Ephphata*, that is, be open'd; the Sense whereof is, Let all Impediments of hearing and speaking be gone from thee, and let the Power of both come unto thee.

Well, and what was the Issue of this kind and hearty Word? Why, that the next Verse will tell us; *And straightway his Ears were open'd, and the String of his Tongue was loos'd, and he spake plain*; ver. 35. that is, immediately upon Christ's pronouncing the word *Ephphata*, his Hearing and Speaking came to him, and both in great perfection; his Hearing was quick, and his Speech was plain, and both by a Touch and a Word's speaking.

Nothing, you see, is hard or difficult to an Almighty Power; 'tis but to *speak the Word* (saith the Centurion to our Saviour) *and thy Servant shall be whole*, Matth. 8. 8. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, saith the Leper in the Gospel; upon which our Saviour spake the word, *I will be thou clean*, and immediately the Leprosy departed from him; Luke 8. 12, 13. What can be more lightly or easily done than by a Touch or a Word? and yet this is all by which these miraculous Works were done. St. Mark tells us, that in all manner of Distempers, all that touch'd him were made whole, Mark 6. 56. and many were heal'd by his Word only, without coming to him or seeing of him. He that spake all things into Being by a word of his Mouth, can as easily restore them again by a word's speaking: So did he raise *E Lazarus*, after he had lain three days in the Grave, with saying only, *Lazarus, come forth*, John

Gospel for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity. 297

11. He brought to Life the Widow's Son of the City of Naim, only by bidding the dead Carcase arise. So did he *Jairus's* Daughter, only by saying unto her *Talitha Cumi, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise*; Mark 5. 41, 42. And here by the word *Ephphata*, he rebuk'd a deaf and dumb Spirit, and restor'd the Hearing and Speaking to one that was depriv'd of both. This is the Miracle here related, together with what went before it. I proceed, in the

Last Place, to what follow'd after it; and that was,
1st, Our Saviour's Charge, *That they should tell no Man of it, tho the more he charg'd them, so much the more a great deal they publish'd it.*

2dly, The Effect that the Miracle had upon them, *They were beyond measure astonish'd.*

3dly, The Confession it drew from them, *saying, He hath done all things well, he maketh the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak.* For the

1st, Our Saviour straitly charg'd them, *That they should tell no Man of it*, ver. 36. He did not affect Vain-glory, in exerting his miraculous Power, nor did he court the Applause or Admiration of the World in any thing that he did; he was above all such Vanity, and us'd all possible Ways and Means to prevent it. Here he charg'd the deaf and dumb Man, whom he had cur'd, not to use his Tongue in speaking of it to any; and those that saw it, not to publish or make words of it. When he cleans'd a Leper of his Leprosy, at his coming down from the Mount, he said unto him, *See, thou tell no Man, but go and shew thy self to the Priest, and offer the Gift that Moses commanded for a Testimony unto them*: Mat. 8. 2, 3, 4. And the same he frequently did upon other like occasions. Sometimes he withdrew out of Crouds and Throngs of People, to avoid their Hosannas and Acclamations. After his Miracle of the Loaves, the Multitude came about him, and would have made him a King; but he took occasion from thence to divert their Thoughts from earthly Glories, and directs them to mind more Heavenly Matters, *John 6*. He never exercis'd his Power for vain or worldly Purposes, but only for the Good of Mankind, as their Wants and Necessities did require. The *Jews* indeed expected Signs and Shews in the Heavens to raise Admiration, some wonderful and prodigious Appearances in the Air and in the Clouds, to draw the Eyes of the World upon him; but he rather
check'd

check'd than gratify'd their vain Curiosity. His Miracles were all salutary and healing, tending to the benefit of Mens Bodies, and the saving of their Souls; such good Offices he did with all Privacy, and without Levity or Ostentation, commanding those that receiv'd the Benefit of them to conceal it, and to tell no Man: but these great and good things could not be hid, like the Sun they discover themselves, and break out of the Cloud that covers them. Their Breasts could not contain a Secret so worthy to be known, neither could they forbear publishing what tended so much to the Publick Good; for *the more he charg'd them, so much the more a great deal they publish'd it.* Which will lead,

2^{dly}, To the Effect the Miracle had upon the Minds of the People, which was Wonder and Astonishment; *ver. 37. They were beyond measure astonish'd.* And that,

1. For the stupendous Greatness of his Works, such as the healing all manner of Diseases, making the Lame to walk, the Blind to see, the Deaf to hear, cleansing the Lepers, raising the Dead, casting out evil Spirits, and dispossessing Legions of Devils out of Persons cruelly tormented by them. These are astonishing Acts, such as none but a Divine Omnipotent Power could effect, and such as might well enough possess the Spectators of them with Wonder and Amazement: considering,

2. The wonderful manner of doing of them; for he effected these things as well absent as present, and that in an instant too, as well as by sensible Degrees, by applying of his Hand, by the Touch of his Garment, by the Word of his Mouth, by the Motion of his Will; to shew (as one hath observ'd) that any Means would serve, that no Means were necessary, and that all Times and Places were alike to the Sovereign Almighty Power of the Son of God: which could not but fill them with Admiration and Astonishment. Considering farther the End and Design of all his wonderful Works, which was nothing but the Good and Welfare of Mankind; he sought not his own Glory, or the Praise of Men, but the Health and Happiness of all that came to him: His mighty Works were so many Miracles of Mercy, which surpriz'd the Beholders, and excited Wonder and Astonishment in all that heard of them.

3^{dly}, And this drew that Confession from them in the close of this Gospel, *saying, He hath done all things well, he maketh the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak;* the last thing

thing to be spoken to in it. Wonder and Astonishment commonly break out into Praises and Thanksgivings; the Breast cannot long contain such deep Resentments, which often force their way out, and vent themselves in Confessions and Commendations. After the Miracle of the Loaves, 'tis said, the People were *amaz'd*, and cry'd out, saying, *Of a truth this is that Prophet that was to come into the World*; John 6. 14. and others, upon the sight of his mighty Works, said among themselves, *Surely this is the Son of God*. And here upon his healing the deaf and dumb Man, they said, *He hath done all things well*; that is, there is no Fault or Defect to be found in him, and nothing but the height of Charity and Goodness appear in all his Actions, for *he maketh the Deaf to hear*. He put his Finger into the Ears of many that were troubled with Deafness, and thereby remov'd all the Impediments of Sense, and their Hearing came to them: And likewise *the Dumb to speak*; he loosen'd the Tongues of many that were speechless and tongue-ty'd, and thereby their Speech was restor'd unto them, and they spake plain.

Thus is the Miracle of the Text briefly open'd and explain'd to you, together with what was previous, and what subsequent to it: It remains only to apply it, by inferring some useful Lessons from it. And,

I. From our Saviour's going about doing good, we may learn to imitate him, and to do likewise; not that we are to imitate him in doing Miracles, or in that stupendous manner of benefiting Mankind, as our Saviour did, these things are out of the reach of our Power; but as far as we may, to be helpful and serviceable to the Good of one another. We cannot raise the Dead, but we may help, comfort, and counsel the Living: We cannot give Sight to the Blind, or Feet to the Lame, by any miraculous way of removing those Infirmities; but we may be, in some sense, Eyes to the Blind, by instructing the Ignorant, and Feet to the Lame, by helping them to walk in the ways of Righteousness. 'Tis not (as one hath well observ'd) the doing Good just in the same Instances, or after the same wonderful manner that this Example directs us to, but only to a like Willingness and Readiness to do good upon all fit Occasions, as far as our Power and Activity will reach. It obliges us in our several Stations, as much as in us lies, to promote the Welfare and Prosperity, the

the Ease and Happiness of our Neighbours; and, as Opportunity offers, to do Good unto all Men. We are, according to our Abilities, to better the State of their Bodies and Minds, that others may bless God for our imparting those Blessings unto them, which he hath more liberally bestow'd upon us.

2. The Miracle in the Text, as well as the rest recorded in Holy Scripture, may serve to confirm us in the Belief of Christ's Doctrine, that he was the true promis'd Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World. So we find *Nicodemus* confessing, *I know (saith he) that thou art a Teacher come from God; for none could do the Works that thou dost, except God were with him: John 3. 2.* He spake as no Man spake, and did the Works which no Man ever did or could do; for which many believ'd on him. That the Messiah or Saviour of the World was to do Miracles when he came, is evident from that Prophecy of *Isaias*, Chap. 35. ver. 4, 5, 6. *Be strong (saith he) and fear not, behold your God shall come and save you: then the Eyes of the Blind shall be open'd, and the Ears of the Deaf shall be unstopp'd; then shall the Lame leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb shall sing.* All which things were punctually fulfil'd and done by our Blessed Saviour, who made the Blind to see, the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak. Hence we find him often urging the Testimony of his Miracles for the Truth of his Messiahship. When St. *John* sent some of his Disciples to him, with this Question, *Art thou he that should come, or must we look for another?* His Answer was an Appeal to his Miracles, *Go tell John (saith he) those things which ye do hear and see; the Blind receive their Sight, the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleans'd, the Deaf hear, the Dead are rais'd up, and the Poor have the Gospel preach'd to them; and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me: Mat. 11. 4, 5, 6.* Miracles are the Seal of a Divine Commission, as being the Effects of a Divine Power; and he that brings this to attest his Doctrine, may be well enough suppos'd to come from God: And therefore we find our Saviour thus reasoning with the *Jews*, *If I do not the Works of my Father, that is, such as manifest a Divine Power, and a Commission from Heaven, believe me not; but if I do, tho ye believe not me, believe the Works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him: John 10. 37, 38.* So that from this Evidence we may safely take him for our Saviour, and repose our whole Trust and Confidence in him.

3. From Christ's looking up to Heaven before he did the Miracle, as was before observ'd, we learn to begin all our Works with Prayer, and to implore the Divine Blessing in all our Enterprizes. This we, who have no power of our selves to help our selves, have far more Need and Reason to do, than he who had all power given him both in Heaven and Earth; and if the Son of God, in his Fullness of Power, crav'd the Aid of his heavenly Father, how much more ought we, in our State of Impotence and Inability, to look up to him for Assistance in all our Undertakings? To this we are directed in *Phil. 4. 6. In every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God.*

Lastly, From the solemn Acknowledgment here made of Christ's Power and Goodness, in curing this deaf and dumb Man, saying, *He hath done all things well, he maketh the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak*; let us learn to own the Hand of God in all his merciful and wonderful Works, ascribing nothing to our selves, but all to his Power and Glory. This Lesson we are taught not only here, but throughout the whole Book of Scripture. The Psalmist especially calls upon us to magnify and extol the Works of the Lord, and in all Conditions and Necessities to have our whole Trust and Dependance upon him; and thus by beginning all our Works with Prayer, and ending them with Praise, we shall find the Comfort and Reward of both: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XXXVI.

The EPISTLE for the Thirteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

Gal. iii. 16. and following Verses.

*To Abraham and his Seed were the Promises made.
He saith not unto Seeds, as of many, but as of
one, and to thy Seed, which is Christ; and this
I say, &c.*

THE Collect for this Day teaches us to pray unto God for Grace, that we may so faithfully serve him in this Life, that we fail not finally to attain his heavenly Promises. The Promises here meant are those of Justification and Salvation by Faith in Christ, whereby all Mankind, who, by the Sin of our first Parents, were doom'd to temporal and eternal Death, are, by the Merits of a Saviour, happily restor'd to a spiritual and everlasting Life. These St. Peter styles, *exceeding great and precious Promises*, as proceeding from the rich inexhaustible Treasure of Divine Goodness, 1 Pet. i. 4. And of these St. Paul here treats in the Epistle for this Day, which begins with the sixteenth Verse of this Chapter, *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the Promises made*, and so on to the 23d: In which we are taught,

First, To whom these Promises were made, and when.
Secondly, That the Law which was given after did not vacate or disannul them.

Thirdly, To what End or Use the Law serv'd, and how it was given.

Fourthly, The Consistency of the Law with these Promises, and the Conclusion of the whole. Of which particularly: And,

First, Of the Persons to whom these Promises were made, and that the first words of the Epistle tell us, 'Twas
to

to Abraham and his Seed. Now this Promise was made to Abraham, long before the giving of the Law by Moses; of which we read, *Gen. 12. 3. In thee, that is, in thy Seed, shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed. He saith not of Seeds, as of many, saith the Apostle; for Abraham's Children by the Bond-woman, viz. Ishmael and his Issue, were not included in the Promise; but in the singular Number, as of one, that is, Isaac, born of Sarah the Free-woman, who was a Type of Christ, that descended from him: and therefore 'tis added, and to thy Seed, which is Christ. This is more fully express'd, Chap. 4. ver. 22, &c. where we read, That Abraham had two Sons, the one by a Bond-maid, the other by a Free-woman; the one denoting the Law, and the other the Gospel. He who was of the Bond-woman was born after the Flesh, and so subject to the carnal Ordinances and Observances of Moses's Law; but he of the Free-woman was by Promise, and so free from those Mosaical Rites, and are justify'd not with, but without them. After which he applies this to the Christians, saying, ver. 28. Now we, Brethren, as Isaac was, are the Children of the Promise; that is, intitled to the Grace of the Gospel, and seek not Justification by the Works of the Law; for we are not Children of the Bond-woman, but of the Free, ver. 31. The Sense of all which is, that the Promise of God's blessing all the Nations of the Earth, both Gentiles as well as Jews, was made to Abraham and his Seed: not to the spurious Brood of Hagar the Handmaid, who continu'd under Circumcision, and were Debtors to the whole Law; but to the lawful Issue of Sarah his Wife, who, by an extraordinary Blessing of Heaven, conceiv'd and brought forth her only Son Isaac, who was to be the Instrument of conveying down these great Blessings to the World. The Descendants from him are those Israelites mention'd by St. Paul, Rom. 9. To whom pertaineth the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises; whose are the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever; ver. 4, 5. These great Privileges belong'd to them, as they were the Offspring of Abraham, to whom Christ was primarily and principally promis'd and sent.*

But did the Promise of these great Blessings belong to all that descended from the Loins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? No, saith the Apostle, for they are not all Israel that are of Israel, neither, because they are the Seed of Abraham,
are

are they all Children; but in Isaac shall thy Seed be call'd: meaning, that they shall be reckon'd the Seed of *Abraham* who are born after the manner of *Isaac's* Birth, that is, by the Word or Promise of God; for *they which are the Children of the Flesh* (saith he) *these are not the Children of God, but the Children of the Promise are counted for the Seed;* ver. 6, 7, 8. The Sense whereof is, that the Promise made to *Abraham* and his Seed, was not made to his carnal, but his spiritual Seed, to Believers begotten after the Image of his Faith, and born by the Word of God, as was *Isaac*.

Now *Abraham's* Faith is describ'd to us in sundry places of Scripture: *Abraham believ'd in God, and it was counted to him for Righteousness;* Rom. 4. 3. Gal. 3. 6. *He stagger'd not at the Promise of God through Unbelief, but was strong in Faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promis'd he was also able to perform.* Again, the same Apostle affirms, *That he was not weak in Faith, but against Hope believ'd in Hope, that he might be the Father of many Nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy Seed be:* Rom. 4. 18, &c. Moreover, the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, that by Faith *Abraham* left his own Country, obeying God's Call, not knowing whither he went: by Faith he trusted in God's Promise that he should have a Son, tho he was old, and *Sarah* past Age for the natural Course of Conception. By Faith he offer'd up his only Son *Isaac*, the Son of his Love and of his Hope, that he should be comforted, and all Nations blessed in him; still believing that of him, tho as good as dead, should spring as many as the Stars in the Sky for Multitude, and as the Sand on the Sea-shore innumerable: judging him faithful that had promis'd these things, and counting that God was able to raise up *Isaac* again from the dead, to accomplish his Purpose; from whence he receiv'd him in a Figure. *Heb. 11. 8—20.*

These are some of the many noble Acts of *Abraham's* Faith, so often recorded, and so much celebrated in Holy Scripture: all which were counted to him for Righteousness, that is, they justify'd him before God, and procur'd Acceptance with him.

Now they that tread in the steps of his Faith, and imitate his stedfast Belief of the Promises, they are the spiritual Seed of *Abraham*, to whom these Promises of Justification and Salvation were made: in respect of these it is, that he is call'd *the Father of the Faithful, and the Father of them*

them that believe; Rom. 4. 16. They that attain to this Faith, are the Children of *Abraham*, and Heirs of the Promise: and these will obtain the same Privilege with their Father *Abraham*, to have their Faith counted to them for Righteousness; that is, their Sins shall not be imputed to them, but their Persons shall be accepted, and counted righteous before God, which are the greatest Blessings that can be bestow'd on any People: which yet are not absolute, but conditional, being founded on the Condition of Faith in Christ, and a firm Reliance upon his Merits.

This then is the Promise, which contains in it the Pardon of Sin, and the Acceptation of our Persons as righteous; and these are the Persons to whom it is made, even the Seed of *Abraham*, that adhere to the Promise as he did, and walk in the steps of his Faith.

But did not the Law, after given by *Moses*, any ways alter or abrogate the Promise made to *Abraham*, and bring in new Terms of Justification by the Works of that Law? No, in no wise: so the Apostle in the next Verse of our Text solemnly declares; *This I say* (saith he) *that the Covenant that was confirm'd before of God in Christ, the Law that was four hundred and thirty Years after could not disannul, that it should make the Promise of none effect*: meaning, that the Covenant of blessing all Nations in *Abraham*, and the Promise of Mercy made to his Seed in the Messiah, were long before confirm'd by God to them, and made an everlasting Covenant, that should not be broken. And it cannot reasonably be imagin'd, that the Law deliver'd by *Moses* 430 Years after the Ratification of that Covenant, should frustrate or invalidate that Covenant made with *Abraham*, and in him with all Believers so long before; or that the Goodness of God would permit him to impose harder, and indeed impossible Terms of Justification, by the Observation of the Law, when in his Promise to *Abraham* and his Seed he had granted it long before upon the milder and better Terms of Faith in Christ: which would be not only to alter, but to destroy the Promise of God, and make it of no effect. This he farther argues in the following Verse: *For if the Inheritance* (saith he) *be of the Law, it is no more of Promise; but God gave it to Abraham by Promise*: that is, the asserting of Justification by the Works of the Law, will quite alter the method of God's dealing with *Abraham*, and of his Proceedings with all his

Posterity. For if the Blessing foretold to come upon all Nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, come upon the performance of the *Mosaical* Law, then there is an end of the Promise made to *Abraham*, and nothing can come to him or his Seed by virtue of that; which is directly contrary to the whole Tenor of Scripture, for that affirms it to come to *Abraham* and his Posterity by Promise only. Beside,

The ascribing of Justification to the Works of the Law, will attribute our Justification to our selves, and our own Performances, and wholly derogate from the Honour and Efficacy of Christ's Satisfaction: for if our keeping the Law be the Terms of our Acceptance with God, we are then our own Justifiers and Saviours, and there can be no need of another's Righteousness, if our own will serve the turn. Moreover,

This will advance the Notion of Merit, and beat down the Price of the Mercy and Merits of a Redeemer: for if our Works are sufficient to Justification, then may they deserve and claim it at God's hand, and we need look no farther, or be beholden to any other. 'Tis upon this foot, that *St. Paul* so strongly argues against Justification by Works, in his Epistle to the *Romans* and elsewhere; telling us, that they who raise the Structure of their Hopes upon the Foundation of their legal Performances, and trust too much to themselves, have whereof to boast: like the proud *Pharisees*, who counted upon a generous kind of Happiness to be atchiev'd by the Merit of their own Works, and scorn'd a borrow'd and beggarly Felicity, that came like an Alms from the Bounty of Heaven. Which Pride and Arrogance of the *Pharisees* is sharply rebuk'd by our Saviour, who told them that *Publicans and Harlots shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven before them*.

Now to him that worketh (saith *St. Paul*) is the Reward reckon'd not of Grace, but of Debt, *Rom. 4. 4.* that is, he that looks to be justify'd by his own Works, receives the Blessing not as from the Grace and Favour of God, but as a Debt due to his own Merits: which Vanity he blames in some of the *Israelites*, who being ignorant of Christ's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own Righteousness, submitted not to the Righteousness of God; *Rom. 10. 3.* And this depriv'd them of all the Comfort and Benefit of it; and therefore we are all taught to say, *Not by Works of Righteousness which we have done, but by his Mercy he saveth*

us. By all which it appears, that the Blessings of Justification and Salvation which we expect, must come from the Promise made to *Abraham* and his Seed, and not from the Law, which was after given by *Moses*.

But if matters be thus, *Wherefore then serveth the Law?* as the Apostle asks the question, in the next Verse of our Text: to which the Answer is in the following words; *It was added because of Transgressions, till the Seed should come, to whom the Promise was made.* Where its being added because of Transgressions, signifies its being given both to discover and prevent Sin, which is the Transgression of the Law: *By the Law* (saith the Apostle) *cometh the Knowledge of Sin, for I had not known Lust, if the Law had not said, Thou shalt not covet.* And as it was given to discover, so was it added to prevent Sin, and to restrain Men from it, by shewing them the Guilt and Punishment of it, and making them to seek out for a Remedy; which could only be by this promis'd Seed: and therefore they were to read and study and live by that Law, till the Seed should come, to whom the Promise was made; that is, till Christ and his Members, his Disciples and Believers, should come to give them clearer and fuller Directions. So that the Law was given them as a Rule to walk by, and to govern their Actions, tho it could not be the Means or Instrument of their Justification, which could only be done by Faith in Christ. In the mean time, the principal Use and Design of the Law was to keep them from Sin, and to affright them from all Transgressions and Violations of it: to which end, *it was ordain'd by Angels in the hand of a Mediator*; that is, it was deliver'd by them in a most solemn and glorious manner, with Thunder and Lightning, and the Sound of a Trumpet, and with all the pompous Solemnities of Dread and Terror, to keep them to the Observance of it. Yea, so terrible was the Appearance, that the People durst not approach the Mountain; and therefore *Moses* was call'd up to be a Mediator, to shew them the Word of the Lord, and by his Hand to deliver it to them. Now this Mediator was not to God only, but between God and the People; for a *Mediator is not a Mediator of one, but God is one.*

When the Apostle had given this Account of the Use and Reason of the Law, he proceeds, in the next Verse, to another Question, which they might be apt to move in this

Case : and that is, *Is the Law then against the Promises of God?* Since the Promise made to *Abraham* is so full of Comfort, and the Law given by *Moses* so full of Terror, is there any Clashing or Opposition between them?

This Question he answers with an *Abfit* ; No, *God forbid!* for if there had been a Law given, which could have given Life, verily Righteousness should have been by the Law ; ver. 21. That is, had the Law any power of absolving us from our Guilt, and granting to us Life and Salvation, indeed then Righteousness might have been by the Law ; then might the Promise made to *Abraham* have been superseded as void and useless, having a later Remedy of being justifi'd and pronounc'd righteous by the Law.

But alas ! the Case is quite otherwise : for neither hath the Law any such power of acquitting and granting Life ; nor if it had, have we any power of performing the Conditions requisite to the receiving the benefit of it ; and so must remain for ever in a helpless and undone Condition, if not reliev'd by the Promise made to *Abraham* and his Seed, and by the Merits of the Messiah who issu'd from him. This is evident from

The last Words of our Text ; for the Scripture hath concluded all under Sin, that the Promise by Faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. The Scripture tells us, that no mere Man ever did or could keep the whole Law ; for in many things we offend all, and if we say we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us. The Law exacts from us perfect and unfinning Obedience, which is not in our power to pay ; and pronounces a Curse upon every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law, to do them. So that by this we are all shut up under Sin, and sentenc'd to eternal Death, the just Wages and Punishment of it. This the Scriptures have reveal'd to us, that we may have recourse to a Saviour, and that the Promise by Faith in Christ might be given to them that believe.

This is the Sense and Sum of the Epistle for this Day ; from whence we may infer a few weighty and useful Lessons : As,

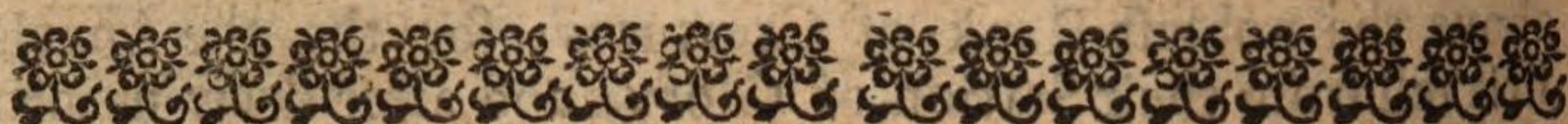
1. We may learn hence to magnify the infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of God, in providing this Remedy for us in the promis'd Seed : We were all lost in *Adam*, but are happily restor'd in *Abraham* ; the Sin of the one being done

done away by the Righteousness of the other. This was the blessed Contrivance of Heaven for the Restauration of Mankind, who had neither Knowledg nor Ability to help themselves: in this forlorn Condition our gracious God took pity upon us, and found out this Expedient to relieve us in our lowest State, and thereby distinguish'd us in his Favour above the noblest Rank of Creatures: for tho the Angels first fell from their Station of Glory, and after drew us into the same Misery with themselves, yet the Son of God was pleas'd to pass by them, and to restore us; for he took not on him the Nature of Angels, but took on him the Seed of *Abraham*: which is an Instance of the Divine Goodness, ever to be own'd and admir'd by the Sons of Men.

2. We learn hence the right Way and Method of our Justification, which is not by the Works of the Law, by which no Flesh living can be justify'd, but by Faith in Christ. The Law speaks nothing but Death and Damnation; and as many as are under the Law, are under the Curse. 'Tis the Grace and Spirit of the Gospel, which alone speaks Life and Salvation; 'tis that helps us to the Pardon of our Sins, and the Acceptance of our Persons as righteous before God. We all stand condemn'd by the Sentence of the Law, which the best of us daily break in Thought, Word, and Deed; so that we can expect no Favour thence, and it would be Arrogance and Folly to build the Hopes of Salvation upon so bad a Foundation. To find Mercy, we must have recourse to the Promise made to us in *Abraham*, and look for a Blessing from the promis'd Seed: and to obtain Justification, we must appeal from the Rigour and Curse of the Law, to the Mercy and Favour of the Gospel, to rely upon the Atonement reveal'd in it as purchas'd by Christ, and bestow'd on them that believe.

Lastly, Let us learn from hence to qualify our selves for this Blessing, and that is by Faith in Christ; for the Promise is made and given only to them that believe. 'Tis not the bare Descent from *Abraham* that will intitle to it; for *St. John* bid the Jews, not to think it sufficient to say, *We have Abraham to our Father, for God was able of these Stones to raise up Children unto Abraham*; *Mat. 3. 9.* And our Saviour tells them, that calling *Abraham their Father* would be of no use to them, without *doing the Works and following the Faith of Abraham*; *John 8.* No external Privileges can do them any service, without internal Grace in the Heart; for *neither Circumcision or Uncircumcision availeth any thing,*
X 3 but

310 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*
but a new Creature. Wherefore let us pray and labour for
a firm and stedfast Faith in Christ; and that not a dead,
idle, and ineffectual Faith, but a Faith that is lively and
operative, and is accompany'd with good Works: for a
dead Faith will never bring us to Life, nor obtain the Pro-
mise of Salvation for us.



DISCOURSE XXXVII.

The GOSPEL for the Thirteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Luke x. 23——38.

*Blessed are the Eyes that see the things that ye see;
for I tell you, that many Prophets and Kings have
desir'd to see those things which ye see, and have
not seen them, and to hear those things that ye
hear, and have not heard them. And behold a
certain Lawyer stood up, &c.*

THE Epistle for the Day spake of Christ in the Pro-
mise made to *Abraham* and his Seed, long before
his Coming; of which before.

The Gospel speaks of him as actually come, shewing
himself to his Disciples, and delivering to them the Words
of eternal Life: and thence declares the much greater Blef-
sedness of those that saw him in the Flesh, than they that
only beheld him in the Promise; as 'tis a far greater Com-
fort to see a Friend, than barely to hear of him. Which
made him *turn to his Disciples, and say privately to them,*
Blessed are the Eyes that see the things that ye see, &c.
meaning, that their Eyes were blessed with the sight of
the most glorious Object, in seeing their Saviour, that they
were capable of beholding. A sight that made good old
Simeon desire to see nothing more after he had seen that, as
knowing that the World could not afford such another
Prospect: *Now (saith he) let thy Servant depart in peace,*
for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation, which thou hast pre-
pared

Gospel for the 13th Sunday after Trinity. 311

pared before the face of all People, to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of thy People Israel. Luke 2. 29, 30, &c.

St. John tells us, that he and many others were bless'd with that happy Sight, *John 1. 14. The Word was made Flesh, and we beheld his Glory, as the Glory of the only-begotten Son of God, full of Grace and Truth. And elsewhere, That which we have seen with our Eyes, which we have looked on, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, that declare we unto you; for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal Life that was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. 1 John 1. 1, 2.*

Now here the Eyes are pronounc'd blessed, that thus saw him in the Flesh; and that *because many Prophets and Kings have desir'd to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.* The Prophets and Kings here mention'd, were *Abraham, Moses,* with other succeeding Prophets and Princes, who in all the Messages they deliver'd concerning the Messiah had longing Desires to see him, and likewise to hear the Doctrine to be reveal'd by him. And yet none of them ever had the happiness of either; for tho God discover'd himself to some of them, and employ'd them in revealing his Will to others, yet the Revelations now made to you, are infinitely beyond any that were afforded to Men before. *Abraham* indeed is said to see Christ's Day, but that was through a Glass darkly; he saw him afar off in the Promise and the Prophecy, but ye saw him face to face. And thence he proceeds to bless the Eyes that saw his Person, and the Ears that heard his Doctrine; both which were Favours and Privileges never vouchsafed to any Kings or Prophets before.

Upon Christ's speaking these things to his Disciples, *Behold, a certain Lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal Life? Which Question proceeded not from any sincere Desire of knowing or doing his Duty, but from an insidious Design of intrapping or intangling of him: to defeat which, our Saviour so orders the matter, as to make him answer his own Question; for referring him to the Law, he asks what is written there? and how readeest thou? He answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength, and with all*

thy Mind, and thy Neighbour as thy self. Whereupon Christ told him, that *he had answer'd right; this do, and thou shalt live.* Where our Saviour comprizes the whole Law in two words, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c. and thy Neighbour as thy self;* and promises eternal Life upon the doing of them. In treating of which, 'twill be requisite to shew,

First, The Nature and Properties of Love.

Secondly, The double Object of it, viz. God and our Neighbour.

Thirdly, The Manner and Measure of both: the one is to be lov'd with all the Heart, &c. the other is to be lov'd as our selves. And,

Lastly, The Reward of so doing, which is eternal Life: This do, and thou shalt live.

First, For the Nature of Love, it may be thus describ'd: 'Tis a Passion of the Soul that inclines it to unite to the thing beloved. I stile it a Passion of the Soul, to shew that 'tis seated within, not in the Lip or the Tongue, but in the Heart; and thence shews it self in Deed and in Truth. And 'tis a Passion that inclines to unite it self to something that is pleasing to it; for all true Love, you know, covets the nearest and closest Union with what it is set upon. The Properties of it are chiefly these two; a Desire to please, and a Desire to enjoy.

He that truly loves any Person, will endeavour to approve himself to him, to do all things that may be grateful and well-pleasing to him, and likewise to avoid all that may any ways offend or displease him. The most difficult Service will be easy to a true Lover, and the most grateful things will be forborn, when they may prove offensive.

Again, True Love desires to enjoy; it delights in the Presence, and grows impatient of the Absence of what 'tis fix'd upon. The Love of a Friend will make us desire his Conversation, to wish for his Company, and to be pleas'd with the enjoying it. This is briefly the Nature, and these are the Properties of Love, and by these Fruits you may know the Truth and Reality of it; which you may therefore try by this Touchstone.

Secondly, As for the Object of Love, 'tis double; viz. God, and our Neighbour.

The

Gospel for the 13th Sunday after Trinity. 313

The first and great Object of our Love is God; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.* He is the Lord, and so his Power and Sovereignty may command our Affections. He is *our God*, in Covenant and Relation to us; and so his Kindness and Nearness to us may engage us to love him. The two strongest Motives of Love, are infinite Greatness and infinite Goodness, both which center in God, and in none beside him.

As for the infinite Greatness and Excellency of his Person, that is far above all that we can express or conceive, for he is the Sum and Source of all Perfections: all imaginable Excellencies are originally in him; and whatever is excellent in any of his Creatures, is intirely deriv'd from him. And what nobler Object can we have for our Love, than He who is the Author and Fountain of all Perfections?

But beside the transcendent Greatness of his Person, the infinite Goodness and Bounty of his Nature may justly command our Affection: *He is good* (saith the Psalmist) *and doth good.* He is infinitely good in himself, and he is unspeakably so to all his Creatures; for he daily watches over us for good, and is still protecting us from all evil; he provides for our Bodies, and preserves our Souls: in a word, he freely gives us all things that are necessary both for Life and Godliness. And what great reason have we to love so amiable an Object, and to give our selves to Him, who so freely gives us all things? But our Saviour mentions here,

2dly, Another Object of our Love; and that is, our Neighbour: for 'tis said not only, that thou shalt love the Lord thy God, but likewise that *thou shalt love thy Neighbour.* And this we are commanded to do,

(1.) And chiefly for God's sake, whose Creature, Child, and Servant he is. Thy Neighbour hath the Image of God stamp'd upon him; his Body is wonderfully made and framed by him in all its parts, his Soul is immortal like himself; he is ally'd to the Father of Spirits, and akin to the holy Angels: which made St. John say, *He that loveth God, must and will love his Brother also*; 1 John 4. 20, 21. Again,

(2.) Thy Neighbour is to be lov'd for his own sake, because he hath the same Nature with thy self; his Body is made of the same Mould, his Soul came out of the same Hands, and is endow'd with the same noble and excellent Facul-

314 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

Faculties: *In this (saith Solomon) the Poor and the Rich meet together, that God is the Maker of them all. Prov. 22. 2.*

Lastly, Our Neighbour is to be lov'd for our own sake, because he is Bone of our Bone, and Flesh of our Flesh, being the same Substance multiply'd and enlarg'd into more Persons: so that to be cruel to him, is in effect to be cruel to our selves; and to be kind to him, is indeed to cherish our own Flesh. In a word, if Likeness be any Cause or Motive of Love, we are to love our Neighbour for God's, for his, and for our own sake; he being in Likeness of Nature ally'd and related to them all. And this Love is to be express'd, partly by avoiding all things that are any way hurtful or displeasing to him, in Body, Goods, or Name; and partly by doing all good Offices, that may be helpful or beneficial to him in all or either of them. This is, in short, the double Object of our Love.

But, *Thirdly*, how or in what measure are these two to be lov'd by us? Why, that our Saviour here tells us; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength, and with all thy Mind:* that is, with the highest and most superlative Affection. And likewise, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self;* that is, with the like Affection that thou bearest to thy self.

For the 1st, The loving of God with all the Heart and all the Soul, &c. denotes both the Sincerity and Integrity of our Love to him.

The Sincerity is signify'd by its being from the Heart, not from the Teeth or the Tongue outward, but from the Heart, Soul, and Spirit; and what springs from thence is commonly sound and sincere. And therefore we find God calling for it, *My Son, give me thine Heart.* 'Tis not for the Ear only to listen to him, nor for the Tongue to talk of him; but for the Heart to receive and embrace him. All true Love of God is rooted there, and all the Acts of it must proceed from thence: it must be with the Heart, Soul, and Mind, that is, with the Understanding, Will, and Affections; which are all to be devoted to him, and inwardly touch'd and inflamed with the Love of him.

And as the Heart, Soul, and Mind denote the Sincerity; so with all the Heart, and with all the Soul, and with all the Mind, denotes the Integrity of our Love to him: that is, he must have all, and will admit of no Rival with him in our Affections; for though he loves a broken, yet he
hates

hates a divided Heart: he will have all or none, and therefore calls for the whole Bent of our Will, the whole Strefs of our Soul, the whole Sway of our Understanding, together with all the Might of our bodily Powers, to be engag'd and employ'd in his Service. In a word, our Love to God must be ardent and intense to the highest degree; it must be whole and entire, as much as possible, and above all things else, which is to love with all the Heart, and all the Soul, and all the Strength.

But if God must have all, how then can our Neighbour have any share, whom we are here likewise requir'd to love? Very well, for these are consistent one with the other: the Love of God doth not exclude the Love of our Neighbour, but comprize and include it under it; for we love God in loving our Neighbour, which is done by his permission and command. Indeed to love any thing in comparison or competition with him, and much more in opposition or contradiction to him, is a high Breach of Order and Obedience to him: In this sense we are bid *to hate Father and Mother*, and all that is dear to us, when they would draw us from him; and *if any thus love the World*, or any thing in it, *the Love of the Father is not in him*. But to love our Neighbour in submission and subordination to our Maker, is suitable to his Will, and a Duty laid upon us by his Command. And this will lead me,

2dly, To the Manner and Measure of loving our Neighbour, which is, *as our selves*: that is, with a like, though not always with an equal Affection; for every one being nearest to himself, may be allow'd, first, to consult his own Welfare. Charity we say begins at home, tho it must not end there, but must extend to all that are round about us, making our own Desires the Measure and Standard of our dealing with others; doing all that Good to others, which we would have done to us, and avoiding all that Evil to any, which our selves would be unwilling to bear. Which is, in short, *to love our Neighbour as our selves*.

Thus we see the Nature of Love, the double Object of it, God and our Neighbour, together with the Manner and Measure of loving both. The performing of these, is by our Saviour here made the Condition of eternal Life; saying to the Lawyer, *This do, and thou shalt live*: meaning, that the doing hereof would certainly bring him to Life and Salvation, but the neglect of them would

as surely deprive him of all well-grounded Hopes of either. But it follows in the Gospel,

The Lawyer willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, *And who is my Neighbour?* that is, he thinking or pretending to have done all these things, moves another captious Question, *And who is my Neighbour?* more for Cavil than Satisfaction. But our Saviour knowing the Wickedness of his Heart, and the great Uncharitableness that lodg'd there, answer'd him by a Parable, saying, *A certain Man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among Thieves, that stripp'd him of his Rayment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain Priest that way, and likewise a Levite, who both saw him, and pass'd away on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journey'd, came where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his Wounds, pouring in Oil and Wine, and set him on his own Beast, and brought him to an Inn, and took care of him: And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two Pence, and gave them to the Host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was Neighbour to him that fell among the Thieves? He said, he that shew'd mercy unto him: then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

The Design of which Parable, was to instil into him the great Lesson of universal Charity and Compassion to all Men, not excepting our greatest Enemies: for though the Priest and Levite, who were Fellow-Jews and Countrymen to the wounded Traveller, were so hard-hearted as to shew him no Mercy; yet a Samaritan, who was of a different Nation and Religion, and between whom and the Jews there was a great Enmity, was more compassionate towards him, washing his Wounds, and applying healing things to him, and at his own charge taking care of him: by which Example, he taught him and us to love our Enemies, and to do good to them that spitefully use us, and persecute us. Moreover, our Saviour's intimating, that every one that is in want and stands in need of Relief, although he be to us as a Jew to a Samaritan, is yet to be look'd upon as a Neighbour, and to be the Object of our Mercy and Pity. And the Lawyer acknowledging that he that shew'd mercy, best shew'd himself a Neighbour to him; our Saviour took the advantage of his

his Confession, and bid him remember and imitate the Example, and go and do likewise.

This is the Substance of the Gospel for this Day, from whence we may learn some weighty and important Lessons. As,

1. From Christ's pronouncing the Eyes blessed, that saw the things which they saw, we may learn to bless God for the clear Revelations he hath made and given to us; that he hath not left us to grope in the dark, as he did the Heathens, nor to creep on by a weak and glimmering Light, as he did the Fathers of old, before Christ's Coming; but hath given us the Meridian Light of the Gospel, which hath shin'd out to us ever since the rising of this Sun of Righteousness with Healing in his Wings. Which made our Saviour thank his Father, that *he had hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and reveal'd them unto Babes*; Mat. 11. 35. *The Mysteries that were hid from former Ages, are now made known unto us*; Eph. 3. 3. And though we had not the Honour of seeing our Saviour with our bodily Eyes, as the Apostles had, yet Christ hath pronounc'd those blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believ'd.

2. From Christ's prescribing the Love of God and our Neighbour, as necessary to eternal Life; let us carefully learn and practise both, and that in the different Measures and Degrees here prescrib'd. As,

(1.) Let us love God with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength, and with all our Mind; that is, with all the Powers and Faculties of Soul and Body, and with the highest and most intense Degrees of all of them, which are all his, and by the greatest Right due to him. This will keep us hearty and constant to our Duty to him, making us to delight in his Worship and Service, and ever ready to run the Paths of his Commandments; yea, this will put us upon the most difficult and costly Duties to please and approve our selves to him, and to forsake all, even Friends, Goods, and Life it self, rather than forsake Him, who is better than all these. And when we can say with *David, Whom have I in Heaven: but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire in comparison of thee*; then do we truly demonstrate our Love to him, and are qualify'd for the highest Act of it, even to enjoy him for ever.

(2.) Let

(2.) Let us love our Neighbour as our selves; that is, with the same kind of Love, tho not always to the same degree: So the Particle *as* is often us'd in Scripture, where we are bid to be holy, *as* he that hath call'd us is holy, and to be merciful, *as* our heavenly Father is merciful; which can be understood only of a Similitude, but not of an Equality, for we can never arrive to the unimitable Pitch of his Holiness or Bounty: so to love our Neighbour *as* our self, is to love him with a like, tho not equal Affection. And this Love consists in making one another's Condition our own, and so commiserating and doing to others, what we our selves would desire in their Case. Let us therefore in all our Intercourse put our selves in one another's room, and then consider what Usage we should expect in their Circumstances, and make that the Rule and Standard of our Dealings with them. But here we must note, that 'tis only a regular Love, and such lawful Desires as we may have for our selves, that is to be the Measure of our loving others; for inordinate Wishes and Desires for our selves, such as the having our Lust, Pride, or Revenge gratify'd, will not warrant our doing or complying with such things in another. 'Tis the lawful, honest, and orderly Love of our selves, that is to be the Standard of our loving others, and that will conduce in a great measure to the Peace, Happiness, and Welfare of Mankind.

Lastly, Since the loving of God above all, and our Neighbour as our selves, are here made the Conditions of eternal Life, let us not vainly hope or presume upon it without them. Love is the principal Act of our spiritual Life here, and can alone bring us to eternal Life hereafter; 'tis indeed the best Qualification for the Regions above, where is the Seat of Love, and nothing but Amity and Concord reign: Nor could any be happy there, in living for ever with those he cannot love.

Wherefore to conclude, if ever we hope to attain to Life and Salvation, let us get our Hearts inflam'd with the Love of God and our Neighbour, which is the best Preparative for the heavenly Mansions: To which God of his Mercy bring us all, thro Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

The EPISTLE for the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Gal. v. 16.

I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh.

THE Collect for this Day directs us to pray for the Increase of Faith, Hope and Charity, the three great Vertues and Ornaments of a Christian's Life; which, by inclining them to love what God commands, will entitle them to all that he hath promis'd.

Now these excellent Graces of God's Holy Spirit being mainly, if not only oppos'd by the Works of the Flesh; the Epistle sets forth both the Works of the Flesh, and the Fruits of the Spirit; to the intent that we may eschew the one, and embrace the other: beginning with the words of our Text, *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh; for the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh; and these two are contrary one to the other.* So that the great Work and Business of the Christian Life is a spiritual Conflict or Warfare between the Flesh and the Spirit; he that *walks in the Spirit, will not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh*; and he that *walks after the Flesh, will not fulfil the Fruits of the Spirit*: for these are contrary one to the other. To describe the Nature and End of this Combat, I must, as our Text directs, shews,

First, What it is to walk in the Spirit.

Secondly, What is meant by fulfilling the Lusts of the Flesh. And,

Thirdly, Shew the Victory we may gain by the one over the other.

First then, What is it to walk in the Spirit? Why, in short, it is to be guided by the Influence of God's Holy Spirit,

Spirit, by hearkning to the good Motions it secretly suggests to us within, and by obeying the good Instructions it openly instils to us without; for both these ways the Holy Spirit of God works upon us: 'tis a Voice inwardly whispering to us, *This is the Way, walk in it, when we are turning to the right Hand, or to the left*: 'tis a Voice outwardly crying to us, like that in the Wilderness, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. But to know the better what it is to walk in or after the Spirit, we must have recourse to the 22d and 23d Verses of this Chapter; where the Fruits of the Spirit are describ'd to be these.

Love, which includes the Love of God and our Neighbour.

Joy, which implies a Complacence and Delight in both.

Peace, which relates to God and Man; and what results from both, a Peace with our own Conscience.

Long-Suffering, which imports a patient bearing of Injuries.

Gentleness, which consists in an easiness to be intreated.

Goodness, which is a Readiness to all good Works.

Faith, which is a firm Persuasion of the Truth of God's Word and Promises.

Meekness, which is a Freedom from all inordinate Passions.

Temperance, which is a moderate Use of all God's Creatures.

Against these, the Apostle adds, there is no Law; that is, there is none to prohibit or punish, but there are many to require and reward them.

These are the Blessed Fruits of God's Holy Spirit; and they that live in the Practice of them, are truly said to *walk in the Spirit*. But,

Secondly, What is it to walk after the Flesh, and to fulfil the Lusts of it? Why, that in brief is, to follow too much the corrupt Desires and Devices of our own Heart, and to be carry'd away by the Sway of a carnal and sensual Appetite. And this will lead us to consider the Works of the Flesh, which are likewise describ'd in the 19th and 20th Verses of this Chapter. And they are these:

Adultery, which is the Incontinence of married Persons, or breaking the Bands of Wedlock.

Fornication, which is the Incontinence of single Persons; whereby they make the Members of Christ the Members of a Harlot.

Uncleanness, which is the Impurity of the Mind, together with the obscene Rites that were paid to the Idol-Gods.

Lasciviousness, which implies all Wantonness of Behaviour, express'd by the Leudness of Words or Actions.

Idolatry, which is the multiplying of Deities, or giving that Worship to false Gods, that is due only to the true.

Witchcraft, which is the contracting with evil Spirits, or the having recourse to them.

Hatred, which is the bearing an evil Mind towards any.

Variance, which is the raising different Parties and Opinions.

Emulations, which are a vain Affectation of Glory and Preheminence.

Wrath, which is an excessive or inordinate degree of Anger.

Strife, which is a Desire of, or Delight in Contention.

Seditions, which are Mutinies or Insurrections in the State.

Heresies, which are Schisms and Divisions in the Church.

Envyings, which are the Swellings and Sickneses of the Mind, arising and occasion'd by both.

Murders, which are a wilful and malicious Shedding of Blood.

Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like, which are an inordinate Use or Abuse of God's Creatures. Of all which the Apostle solemnly declares, that *they which do these things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

These are, in short, the Works of the Flesh; and they that live and delight in them, are said to *walk after the Flesh*, and to *fulfil the Lusts of it.*

Thus we have a brief Account both of the *Fruits of the Spirit*, and of the *Works of the Flesh*; and likewise what it is to walk in the one, and to fulfil the Lusts of the other: by which we may see the true Sense and Meaning of our Text, *I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh*; that is, if we give up our selves to the Guidance and Blessing of God's Holy Spirit, and labour to bring forth the Fruits thereof, we shall be enabled to conquer all the Reluctance of the carnal Appetite, and subdue the Opposition arising from all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh.

But before I speak to the Victory we have or may have by the Graces of the Spirit over the Works of the Flesh,

'twill be requisite to observe the Struggle and Combat that is found between them. This is held forth in the next words to the Text : *For the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh ; and these are contrary one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would :* meaning, that the Flesh strongly inclines and enticeth to Evil ; the Spirit, on the other hand, seeks to draw us from it, and powerfully excites to that which is good : both these are striving for the Mastery within us, and, like the Twins in *Rebecca's Womb*, struggle to overcome and supplant each other. This the Gentile Philosophers found, who took notice of *two main Principles*, that govern'd the Actions of Mankind ; the one they call'd the *Principle of Good*, the other the *Principle of Evil* : and these two maintain a continual Contest and Enmity with one another. *The Principle of Goodness*, which is no other than the Spirit of God working in us, minds and moves us only to things pleasing to God, and agreeable to his Will. *The Principle of Evil*, which is no other than the fleshly or carnal Appetite, inclines us only to what is suggested by Satan, and suited to that evil Spirit. And as there is a perpetual Enmity between these two Principles, that which is of God constantly opposing and warring against whatsoever cometh from the Devil ; so the Apostle tells us of the *Flesh and the Spirit*, that *these two are contrary one to the other*. Others of the Antients have express'd this by a *good* and an *evil Genius*, which they make the constant Attendants upon every Person ; the one prompting to Vertue and Goodness, the other to all manner of Vice and Wickedness : These two contrary Principles occasion all that Difference of Action, and all that Struggle that is found in the World between Good and Evil.

The first Rise hereof was from the Apostacy of our first Parents, who by the Fall craz'd all their Faculties, and brought Confusion and Disorder upon the whole Man : before that, all things were well and quiet within us ; Reason being plac'd in the Throne, and all the inferior Faculties subjected to its Rule and Governance, which they all readily and carefully obey'd. We came out of God's Hand *very good*, having his Image stamp'd upon us, which consisted in *Knowledg, Righteousness, and true Holiness* : which made *Solomon* declare, that *God made Man upright* ; but the first Transgression brought a Crookedness and Perverseness into our Nature, which hath broken the Order and Harmony.

Epistle for the 14th Sunday after Trinity. 323

mony of all our Faculties. Hence it comes to pass, that the inferior Powers of the Soul rise up, and sometimes overrule the superior, the carnal Appetite rebelling against Reason, and the Flesh lusting against the Spirit: *These two are contrary one to the other*; God Almighty having put an Enmity between what is born of him, and the Seed of the Serpent. And as he divided between the Night and the Day, and put an irreconcilable Opposition between Light and Darknes; so hath he put a perpetual Enmity between the bright Beams of the Divine Spirit, and the filthy Steams of fleshly Lusts: the one leading us to God and all that is Good, the other leading us to Satan, the World, and all manner of Evil. These two contrary Principles, by the Unhappiness of our Birth, are still struggling in our Breasts; for which reason a Christian's Life is often stil'd a *Warfare*, and we the *Soldiers of Jesus Christ*, being list'd under his Banner, and fighting against those *fleshly Lusts*, that war against the Soul.

This Conflict we find St. Paul at large describing in his own Person in the 7th Chapter to the *Romans*; where he sets forth the Difficulties he encounter'd, the Assistance he had from the Holy Spirit, and likewise the Ground that Sin and Satan sometimes got over him in it. *I know* (saith he, ver. 18.) *that in me, that is, in my Flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for tho' to will is present with me, yet how to perform that which is good I find not*: that is, his Flesh lusted against the Spirit; and tho' by the Light of the Spirit he knew and approv'd of what was good, yea, and many times will'd and desir'd it too, yet the Flesh was sometimes too hard for him, and overbore all his Resolutions: insomuch (as he goes on) *The Good that I would, I do not, but the Evil I would not, that I do*. He consented to what was good, and yet omitted it; and he dislik'd Evil, and yet practis'd it; being vanquish'd by the fleshly Part, and carry'd away by the Stream of a sensual Appetite: which, in the next Verse, he styles, *The Sin that dwelled in him*. *I find then a Law* (saith he, ver. 21, &c.) *that when I would do Good, Evil is present with me*. His Desires towards Good were sometimes check'd and overrul'd by his Inclinations to Evil: for albeit that he delighted in the Law of God after the inward Man, his superior Faculties convincing him of the Truth, and causing in him some Delight in what God's Law requir'd; yet he felt another Law in his Members, warring against the Law of his Mind, and bringing him into Captivity

to the Law of Sin, which was in his Members: meaning, that by the Importunity and Sollicitations of the Flesh, he was carry'd away to act against the Dictates of his own Mind; which made him cry out in the following Verse, *O wretched Man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this Body of Death?* By this Instance we plainly see the words of our Text verify'd, that *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh; and these are contrary one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* The Truth hereof we all find and feel by our own daily and doleful Experience.

Now the striving against these ghostly Enemies, is the Warfare that we are call'd upon to accomplish. This is that good Fight of Faith, which Christianity engages us in under the Captain of our Salvation: in which, if we manfully acquit our selves, we may be sure of coming off with Success and Victory. And this will lead to the

Third and last Thing propounded; which was the Victory we may obtain by the Graces of the Spirit over the Works of the Flesh: for if ye walk in the Spirit, ye shall not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh. If we resist the Devil, we are told, he will flee from us: 'tis but to stand and oppose, and the day will be ours, for he must either fall or flee before us; nor can the strongest Assaults of the Flesh prevail without our own Consent and yielding to them. All their Strength lies in our own Treachery, for if we resolve to be true and firm to our selves, all their Suggestions can never hurt us; 'tis but to withdraw our Will and Affections from them, and all their Power over us would soon cease, and come to nothing. Sensual Objects may indeed entice, but they cannot enforce us; and the most inviting Charms can have no Efficacy, if we turn the deaf Ear to them. 'Tis a great Mistake to think, that the Principle of Evil hath any such uncontrollable Power, as forcibly to enter our Souls, or lead us captive: No, it hath no such hidden and irresistible Influence, as to force us to any Evil; we are only betray'd into it by our own Folly and Weakness; and neither Satan, the World or the Flesh have any other but willing Bond-slaves.

But the main Preservative against the Power of our Lusts is the Assistance of Divine Grace, that is at all times sufficient for us, and will enable us to resist and repel the strongest Temptations; stronger is the Spirit of God, that worketh

worketh in us, than all the evil Spirits that conspire against us. And as this Grace is sufficient, so is it ever ready for us. The Spirit of God is never wanting to those that seek to, and desire its Aid, and never fails such as heartily engage in this spiritual Combat: *If earthly Parents (saith our Saviour) know how to give good Gifts to their Children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it?* While we strive against Sin, we shall be sure to have the Spirit of God to strive with us, and that will derive that Strength and Power into us that will make us *more than Conquerors*. Hence we find St. Paul, who struggled so hard, and was sometimes foil'd by the Power of his Corruption, at last *thanking God for giving him the Victory, thro Jesus Christ our Lord*; Rom. 7. 25. 1 Cor. 15. 57. And elsewhere we are told, that if we *fight this good Fight of Faith*, we shall *finish our Course with Joy*, and in the end *receive a Crown of Glory*. I say then with the Apostle, that *if ye walk in the Spirit, ye shall not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh*, but shall find Grace and Strength enough to subdue and vanquish them. So that from this Discourse we may learn,

1. The difference between a Regenerate and Unregenerate Man; in the one the Spirit prevails, in the other the Flesh is predominant: that is, the Will of the one is led by the Spirit, which makes him act the Deeds, and *bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit*; but the Will of the other follows the carnal Dictates, and performs the Will of the Flesh. The Character of a good Man is to be led by the Spirit into the Ways of Purity and Peace, which is to *walk in the Spirit*: And the Note of a bad Man is to follow the Sway of sinful and vile Affections; which is to *fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh*. From whence we may learn,

2. How to know and judg of our spiritual State: if we are acted by the Holy Spirit of God, and delight in the foremention'd Fruits of it, we may safely conclude our selves in a Regenerate State; for *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*.

But if we give up our selves to the Command of a carnal and sensual Appetite, and are at the beck of every imperious Lust, we are in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity; for *they they that walk after the Flesh cannot please God*, nor will they ever be accepted by him. Not that every Act of Concupiscence or inordinate Affection will exclude us from the Favour of God, or the State of Regeneration;

tion ; but 'tis the voluntary Consent and wilful Continuance in the Love and Practice of them that denominates an Unregenerate Man, and excludes from the Kingdom of Heaven. We find *St. Paul* sometimes complaining that the Body of Sin was too strong for him, that the Law in his Members warred against the Law of his Mind, and carry'd him captive to the Law of Sin and Death ; but still he lamented and labour'd against it, and never left fighting and striving till he had got the Mastery : which teaches us what to do in the like Case ; to wit, not to yield to, but strive against Temptation, and to say with *Joseph*, *How can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?* Wherefore, in the

Last place, let us learn from hence to *walk in the Spirit*, and to make no provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof. To encourage us, the Apostle assures us, *There is no Condemnation to them that walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit* ; Rom. 8. 1. but they that do otherwise will certainly *fall into Condemnation* ; for *to be carnally-minded is Death, but to be spiritually-minded is Life and Peace* : ver. 6. & ver. 13. *If ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live.* We see then the Way both to Life and Death ; let us all this day make our Choice, and such a one too, of which we may never have cause to repent.





DISCOURSE XXXIX.

The GOSPEL for the Fourteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Luke xvii. 11—20.

*And it came to pass, as Jesus went to Jerusalem,
that he passed through the midst of Samaria and
Galilee: And as he entred into a certain Village,
there met him ten Men that were Lepers, who stood
afar off, &c.*

THE Epistle for this Day spake of the Graces of the Spirit, and the Victory obtain'd by them over the Works of the Flesh.

The Gospel speaks of the miraculous Acts of the same Holy Spirit, and the Victory obtain'd thereby over Satan and the World, our great and ghostly Enemies.

The particular Miracle here related is that wrought by our Saviour on the ten Lepers, the Subject of this Day's Gospel. In which we may observe,

First, Our Saviour's Progress to *Jerusalem*, which was through the midst of *Samaria* and *Galilee*; that which may be learnt from thence, is what hath been before observ'd in the Miracle of the deaf and dumb Man, *viz.* Christ's going about doing Good, and spreading his healing Influences in all places of the Country, and the Regions round about: of which you may read in the Gospel for the twelfth Sunday after *Trinity*. And as in that Miracle of the deaf and dumb Man, so in this of the Lepers, we may observe,

First, What went before it.

Secondly, What happen'd in it. And,

Thirdly, What follow'd after it.

*First, As for what went before the Miracle, it was Christ's
entring into a certain Village, the ten Lepers meeting him
there,*

there, and the Lepers standing afar off. What this certain Village was, it not being nam'd here or elsewhere, will not be much material to enquire: Certain it is, that 'twas either in *Samaria* or *Galilee*, thro which he passed in his way to *Jerusalem*; but wherever it was, 'tis farther said, that

Ten Men that were Lepers met him there. Sometimes we read that he went to them as Physicians do to their sick Patients; which is imply'd in his going about doing Good. Where Distance or Mens Infirmities were such, as would not permit them to come to him, there he either went to them, or heal'd them at a distance: And where he did not readily find Objects to shew his Mercy and Compassion, there he went about to seek them. But here we read that these ten Men that were Lepers came and met him, upon the Report (no doubt) that they had receiv'd of him; for he heal'd one Leper before, as he came down from the Mount: of which we read, *Mat. 8. 2, 3.* *St. Mark* speaks of the same or another, *Mark 1. 40.* And so doth *St. Luke, Chap. 5. 12, 13.* The Fame whereof being spread far and near, drew these ten Lepers to him. Indeed, 'tis all one to Omnipotence to cure ten as one, and ten thousand as well as ten; for to an Almighty Power all things are possible, and nothing can be hard or difficult to him, to whom nothing is impossible: And therefore our Saviour did not any way check their Boldness, but rather commended their Faith in coming to him.

But how did they behave themselves when they came to him? Why, the next words tell us, that they *stood afar off*; which they did not so much for fear, as to comply with the Law of *Moses* concerning Lepers, which was to stand off, and to be separated from Society till they were cleansed: for the Leprosy being a foul and infectious Disease, they that had it were to be remov'd out of the Camp, and to abide in their Tents seven Days, and the Priest was to go forth to them; as we read in the 17th Chapter of *Leviticus*. Accordingly, in compliance with this Law, these ten Lepers, being unclean by their Leprosy, stood afar off, and durst not come near unto him: nor would our Saviour encourage them to break the Law of the Lepers, by calling them nearer.

But what did they at that distance in order to be heal'd? Why, 'tis said, that being afar off, they lifted up their Voices, and cry'd unto him; which Cries were loud enough to reach his Ears, and were heard by him, as appear'd afterward.

To these their Cries they added this short Petition, *Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us.* They did not harangue it to him about the Soreness and Sadness of their Distemper, to move Compassion, or about the Means and Methods of their Cure; nor did they go to him, like the proud *Pharisee*, with Boasts of their own Righteousness, that they were not as bad as other Men; nor with long *extempore* Prayers, to charm him with the Multitude and Variety of Words, which are fulsom and nauseous to all they are apply'd to, and no way become true and humble Supplicants: but they cry'd to him with these few hearty words, *Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us.* And indeed we find in Scripture, that these few hearty Words have prevail'd more, and been attended with greater Successes than long and tedious Orations.

The poor *Publican*, when he went up solemnly to the Temple to worship, utter'd only this short Litany, *Lord be merciful to me a Sinner*; Luke 18. 13. and was sent away justify'd to his own House, before the proud *Pharisee*, with his long Robes, and long Prayers. The poor blind Man, in the same Chapter, following our Saviour with his earnest Prayer, utter'd only these words, *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me*; ver. 28, 29. His whole Prayer was no more, which, 'tis said in the next Verse, he went on repeating again and again; *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me*: And the Effect of it was, that his Eyes were open'd, and his Sight restor'd to him. In like manner the Lepers in the Text lifted up their Voices, and said more than once, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*; and what the Success was, we shall see by and by. In the mean time, we may observe the Wisdom and Piety of our Church, in inserting this frequent and successful Petition into her Liturgy or Publick Service, doubling and trebling it in the Litany to the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity; saying, *Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us, Lord have mercy upon us*: which, if repeated with Earnestness and Affection, is so far from a vain Repetition (as some have vainly objected) that 'tis the most effectual way to obtain Audience and Acceptance. These are the previous Circumstances that went before the working of this Miracle; from whence I proceed,

Secondly, To the Miracle it self, the Account whereof follows in the next Verse; *And when he saw them, &c.*
It

It seems they were not so far off, but he could both see and hear them. They were not indeed near enough for him to touch them, and so were not heal'd, as the Leper in *St. Matthew* was, by a Touch of his Hand: but the healing Virtue was convey'd to them by a Glance of his Eye, or a Motion of his Mind; for he us'd not those sanative words, *I will, be thou healed*, or *I will, be thou clean*, as he did to other Lepers: which words immediately drove the Leprosy from them, as we read, *Matthew* 8. 3. & *Luke* 5. 13. But all he said to them was, *Go shew your selves to the Priest*; which words were not wont to make, but to follow the Cure. The words refer to the Law of *Moses* concerning Lepers, in *Lev.* 14. where the Leper was commanded to be brought to the Priest, who was to offer a Sacrifice for him in order to his cleansing; and when the Cure was wrought, he was requir'd by the Law to shew himself to the Priest, and to make an Offering, that he might pronounce him clean, without which they were not admitted into the Camp or Congregation. Accordingly our Saviour, in obedience to the Law, to which he was wont to shew a great Conformity, said unto them, *Go immediately unto the Priest*; adding (as *Dr. Hammond* supposes) *Before ye come thither, ye shall be cur'd*: upon which, without any Hesitation or Delay, they go their way, and *it came to pass as they went they were cleansed*. This was the Miracle, and for such it was taken by all that saw or heard of it; the curing of the Leprosy especially, without the use of any means, being look'd upon as the peculiar Work of God.

Thirdly, But what follow'd after the working of this Miracle? Why, there were three things observable that attended it; *viz.* The Thankfulness of one of the Persons heal'd: The Ingratitude of all the rest: And the Blessing pronounc'd on the thankful Person. For the

First, We read, that *one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud Voice glorified God, and fell down on his Face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan*. Where we may observe,

1. His Sense of the Mercy receiv'd; *He saw that he was healed*. This is the first step or degree of Thankfulness, which begins with the Sense of Benefits receiv'd: for none can be thankful for what he hath no Feeling or Perception of; the Benefit must strike the Mind, and affect the Heart, before there can be any true Gratitude for it: yea, it must be

be well consider'd and frequently recollected, or else it will sink away into Oblivion and Ingratitude. *Whoso is wise* (saith the Psalmist) *will consider these things, and he shall understand the Loving-Kindness of the Lord*; Psal. 107. last. For himself, he made the Mercies of the Lord the daily Subject of his Study and Meditation, and often call'd upon his Soul to bless the Lord, and not to forget his Benefits. Accordingly this Leper in the Text felt his Mind touch'd with a grateful Sense of the Kindness receiv'd, in curing his Leprosy, and restoring his Health to him. He could not forget or think slightly of it; and that made him,

2. *To turn back* to visit and thank his Benefactor: being heal'd in the way, he presently went back to own and acknowledg the Favour. When the rest went away unconcern'd, without any regard to the Mercy receiv'd, or the Person that bestow'd it; he, on the contrary, could not rest till he return'd to his Physician, and paid him that Tribute of Acknowledgment that was due to him. One great Act of Gratitude is to own and esteem a Kindness; and therefore we find *David*, that great Pattern of Thanksgiving, often acknowledging and magnifying the Divine Favours, extolling them to the Skies, saying, *Thy Mercy reaches to the Heavens, and thy Faithfulness to the Clouds*. Such a deep Sense and Resentment had this Leper of the Kindness our Saviour shew'd to him; and that made him,

3. *With a loud Voice to glorify God*. His thankful Heart led him not only to publish it to the World, but to break out into loud Praises and Thanksgivings unto God for it; ascribing the Cure of his Leprosy wholly to the Divine Power and Goodness, and saying with the devout Psalmist, *Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy Name be all the Glory*. This is a high Act of Gratitude, and the best Return we can make for all his Benefits: and therefore this grateful Leper having no better Requital to make to him, fell to praising and glorifying God; which is more acceptable to him, than the most costly Sacrifices and Burnt-Offerings: and this he did in all the lowliest Postures of Humility and Adoration; for we read,

4. That *he fell down on his Face at his Feet, giving him Thanks*. Where the Mind is duly affected with a hearty Sense of Divine Favours, there it will appear in the humble Gestures of the Body; for we are bid to glorify God with our Bodies as well as Souls, which are both his, and that is best done by the humblest Postures and Expressions of both.

Examples

332 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

Examples of which we have many in Holy Scripture : *David* in his Prayers and Praises was mostly on his Knees, and often calls upon others to *worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.* The poor *Publican* could scarce lift up his Eyes to Heaven, but smote upon his Breast, out of a deep Sense of his own Unworthiness. And here the poor *Leper* fell down on his Face at *Jesus's* Feet, to express his Thankfulness. Tho he before stood off by reason of his Leprosy, yet being now cur'd of that unclean Disease, he came near unto him, and fell down on his Face before him : Of whom 'tis farther added, that *he was a Samaritan*, to signify that he was no Jew, from whom such things might be better expected ; but an Inhabitant of *Samaria*, to whom the *Jews* bore a great Hatred both as to their Religion and Country.

But were the rest as grateful as this poor *Samaritan* ? No, far from it ; for we find our Saviour, in the next words, upbraiding their Ingratitude, and saying, *Were there not ten cleansed ? But where are the nine ?* adding, *There are not found any that return'd to give Glory to God, save this Stranger.* All the rest went their way without making any Return at all ; they took no notice of the Kindness shew'd to them, but utterly forgot both him that heal'd them, and the manner of their Cure. Instead of owning the Mercy, they cast off all Regard or Resentment of it. When they should give Glory to God, they either ascrib'd it to something else, or totally overlook'd it. Instead of falling down on their Face before him in a humble Acknowledgment and Adoration of his Goodness, they turn'd their backs upon him in a vile and ungrateful Contempt of all his Kindness, forgetting the God that help'd them, and shewing no regard to the Operations of his Hand.

Now our Saviour's mentioning and upbraiding their Ingratitude, shews all such Unworthiness to be highly displeasing and offensive to him ; tho yet his infinite Patience and Goodness was such, as to persevere in doing Good, notwithstanding all their base and foul Ingratitude towards him. This generous Friend and Benefactor to Mankind, met with Discouragements and unworthy Returns enough to stop the current of his Bounty ; for he was slighted by those whom he had most oblig'd, yea and sought to be betray'd by them whom he came to save : and yet all this and much more could not make him desist from shewing Favours. He tells us himself, that our heavenly Father is
kind.

Gospel for the 14th Sunday after Trinity. 333

kind to the Unthankful, for he maketh the Sun to shine on the Good and Bad, and the Rain to descend on the Just and Unjust; and wills us to be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful, and so shall we shew our selves the Children of the most High.

This is the Sense and main Design of the Gospel for this Day, to imitate our Saviour in doing good; not in the miraculous way that he did, for that is above our power, but in the ordinary ways and methods which he is pleas'd to vouchsafe us.

But the Gospel concludes with a Blessing pronounc'd on the thankful Leper, and a great Commendation of his Faith: He said unto him, *Arise, go thy way, thy Faith hath made thee whole.* The poor Leper was yet either upon his Knees, or prostrate upon his Face, from a humble Sense of the Kindness he had receiv'd; which made our Saviour say unto him, *Arise, stand upon thy Feet, and go away to the Business of thy Vocation, whereunto thou art call'd; withal adding the Motive of his Kindness, and the Cure wrought upon him in these words, Thy Faith hath made thee whole: Thy firm Belief of my Power and Willingness to help thee hath engag'd me to do it for thee, and the Strength of thy Faith hath procur'd thee this Soundness.* Indeed great things are spoken in Scripture concerning Faith, and ascrib'd to the Power of it; it can remove Mountains, raise the Dead, heal all manner of Diseases, and conquer all Opposition. The Author to the *Hebrews* imputes all the great Atchievements of the Patriarchs and other Worthies to the Strength of their Faith; who by that *subdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, obtained the Promises, quenched the Violence of Fire, out of Weakness were made strong, &c.* And no wonder, for Faith engages that Divine Power, that is able to do all things.

And thus having consider'd the chief things contain'd in this Gospel, 'twill be requisite to infer some Practical Lessons from them. And,

1st, From the miraculous Cure of these Lepers, we may farther confirm our Faith in the Divinity of the Person and Power of our Blessed Saviour. Among other things, which the Disciples of *John* were bid to tell their Master, to convince him of his Messiahship, this was one, that *the Lepers were cleansed; Mat. 11. 5.* which in the way that he did

did it, could only be effected by a Divine Power, and may serve to increase our Faith and Hope in him.

2dly, From these Lepers short and successful Prayer, consisting only of these few words, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*; we may learn to avoid the Practice of the Heathen, who think to be heard for their much speaking; and the *Pharisees*, who value themselves for their long Prayers: whereas God Almighty neither looks nor cares for either; he knows our Necessities before we ask, and if our Hearts be right, a few words will serve the turn for the Supply of them. *Solomon* hath minded us, that *God is in Heaven, and we upon Earth, and therefore our Words to him should be few*; for thereby we best own his infinite Greatness, together with his exceeding Goodness and Readiness to help us, which will prevail more with him than a Multitude or Variety of Words can do: and a short Ejaculation, darted from a devout Heart, will go farther, and pierce deeper than the longest Speeches and Harangues of the Hypocrite.

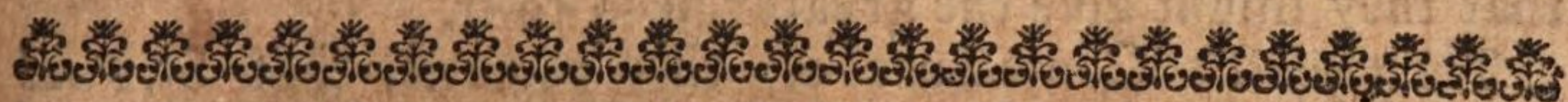
3dly, From the Leper's returning to give Thanks, and the kind Acceptance it met with, we learn the great Virtue of Gratitude, which consists in owning and glorifying God for all his Blessings. Indeed Gratitude is a Debt due for Benefits receiv'd, and is therefore generally reckon'd a Branch of natural Justice; for in giving Thanks we are true and just to our Benefactor, but in omitting of it we are false and unjust to him: and therefore we are often bid in Holy Scripture, *In every thing to give Thanks*. We are forward enough to ask for what we want; as our daily Food, for Rain in case of Drowth, and fair Weather in case of immoderate Rain; and so likewise for other Blessings. Oh let us not be backward to return Thanks for what we receive, but learn of this poor Leper, who, being healed in the way, would not go a step farther, till he had gone back to pay his Acknowledgment to his great Benefactor. This is the Practice of all grateful Souls; from whom we should learn to do likewise.

4thly, From the other Nine's not returning to give Thanks, and our Saviour's Resentment of it, we may learn to hate and abhor the Sin of Ingratitude, which is a Vice odious and hateful in the sight of all Men: *Ingratum si dixeris, omnia dixeris*; to say a Man is ungrateful, is to say the worst that can be said of any. Let it never then be said of us, that we pray for Rain, or fair Weather, or other

Epistle for the 15th Sunday after Trinity. 335

ther needful Blessings when we want them, but never come to give God Thanks for them, when we have them: like the Hog in the Fable, who greedily eat the Acorns, but never look'd up to the Tree from whence they came; or these nine Lepers, that earnestly pray'd to be heal'd, but when that was done, never return'd to give God the Glory of it: let all such Ingratitude be far from us.

Lastly, From God's blessing the thankful Leper, and ascribing all to the Strength of his Faith, let us learn to pray for those excellent Graces, which will keep us sound here, and make us for ever happy hereafter.



DISCOURSE XL.

The EPISTLE for the Fifteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

Gal. vi. 11, to the end.

Ye see how large a Letter I have written unto you with mine own Hand. As many as desire to make a fair Shew in the Flesh, constrain you to be circumcised, &c.

THE Collect for this Day directs us to pray, that God would keep his Church with his perpetual Mercy; and because our own great Frailty daily exposes us to many Dangers, we beseech him to keep us from all things hurtful, and to lead us to all things profitable to our Salvation, &c. Now the keeping of the Church here pray'd for, is chiefly to keep it in the true Faith; and because there are many things that are apt to corrupt it, and to make Men fall away from the Purity of it, as Prosperity and Persecution, we are here taught to pray to be preserv'd from all things that may prejudice, and to be kept to all things that may promote our Salvation. Accordingly the Epistle for this Day acquaints us with St. Paul's great Care to preserve the *Galatians* in the Purity of the Christian Faith, against the Attempts of false Teachers, who sought

sought to bring them back to the antiquated Rites and Ceremonies of the Jewish Worship.

The Epistle begins with these words; *Ye see how large a Letter I have written unto you with mine own Hand.* The large Letter here intended, is this Epistle to the *Galatians*, wherein he enlarg'd himself on this point, to confirm them in the Principles of Christianity, which some endeavour'd to subvert, by preaching up the perpetual Obligation of *Moses's* Law. And tho' other of his Epistles were written by an *Amanuensis*, and only the Salutation with his own Hand, that they might be known to be his; yet this he tells them was all written by himself with his own Hand, that they might give the greater heed to it.

Theophylact's Conjecture on this place is, that *St. Paul* was accus'd for preaching elsewhere for the Observation of the Old Law, contrary to what is contain'd in this Epistle, and therefore was forc'd to write a large Letter with his own Hand, for his own Vindication in this matter. This Conjecture, I say, is wholly precarious and without ground; for we find no where any mention of such an Accusation, and therefore there could be no need of any such Vindication. But the Conjecture of some is yet more vain, *viz.* that *St. Paul* in these words endeavour'd to excuse the Badness of his Writing, the Largeness of the Letters, or Illness of the Characters used in it; that whereas his other Epistles, written by an *Amanuensis*, were in a fairer and better Hand, this of his own writing was more rough and unpolish'd. But this was too mean a matter for the Consideration of an Apostle, whom we cannot suppose to have condescended to so trifling an Apology. In short then,

The plain Sense of these words is, that the Apostle being inform'd of some false Teachers crept into the Churches of *Galatia*, who preach'd up Circumcision, and other *Mosaical* Rites, he wrote this large Letter or Epistle with his own Hand, to warn them against them, and to prevent their being seduc'd by them. To which end, he proceeds in the next words to describe these false Teachers,

1st, By their plausible Behaviour, or *making a fair Shew in the Flesh.*

2dly, By the Badness of their Doctrine; *They constrain you to be circumcis'd.*

3dly, By their evil End and Design, which was to avoid *Persecution for the Cross of Christ.*

1st, For

1st, For the Plausibleness of their Behaviour, 'tis express'd in these words; *As many as desire to make a fair Shew in the Flesh.* 'Tis the Guise and Practice of false Teachers, to put fair, tho false Colours upon what they say or do; to make use of Disguises, to hide the Evil and Mischief they intend, and to make the fairest Show and Appearance they can. Our Saviour tells us, that the *false Prophets came in Sheeps-Clothing*; that is, with soft and smooth Pretences, tho inwardly they were ravenous Wolves, that came not but to devour and destroy. The Apostle tells us of others, that *with good Words and fair Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple.* Of all such we are bid to *beware*, as those that come with all the Deceivableness of *Unrighteousness*, able if it were possible to deceive the very *Elect*. Of this kind were the false Teachers in this Chapter, who desir'd to make a fair Show in the Flesh, that is, would be thought the most zealous and conscientious of all the Jews. And such are the Dissenting False Teachers in our days, who by feign'd Shews of Zeal and Reformation, delude the Ignorant into Schism and Sedition. Of all such we cannot be too cautious, by giving no heed to their Words, and shunning their Ways and their Example. But to the Plausibleness of their Behaviour, the Apostle adds,

2dly, The Unsoundness of their Doctrine, in these words; *They constrain you to be circumcis'd*: meaning, that they urg'd upon these *Galatians* the Necessity of Circumcision, tho that painful Rite was done away, and exchang'd for the easier Rite of Baptism by our Blessed Saviour: yet to make the fairer Shew in the Flesh, they press them to take this Mark of Circumcision in their Flesh, being the Seal of the Covenant made to *Abraham* and his Seed. For this they urg'd the Institution of God himself, who laid this Ordinance of Circumcision in charge on *Abraham* and his Posterity for ever, *Gen. 17.* For which reason they pretended it to carry an eternal Obligation, being call'd therefore *the Covenant of Circumcision*, *Acts 7. 8.* This shak'd the Faith of many, and begat that first and great Controversy in the Christian Church, about the Continuance of the Rites and Ceremonies of *Moses's Law*; which our Apostle, in this and sundry other of his Epistles, hath fully decided for us, having by many Arguments prov'd and determin'd for the Abrogation of them: for Christ the Substance being come, in whom all those typical Rites and Shadows were fulfill'd, they all vanish'd and were

338 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

dispell'd by the Brightness of his Coming, as Mists and Vapors are scatter'd by the Approach of the Sun. So that to continue those Rites, is a virtual Denial of Christ's coming in the Flesh : and therefore St. Paul testifies and declares unto them, that *if ye be circumcis'd, Christ can profit you nothing*; Gal. 5. 2. And ver. 3. *I testify again* (saith he) *to every Man that is circumcis'd, that he is a Debtor to keep the whole Law*; and so can have no Justification thence. Christ is become of no effect to them, being fallen from the Grace and Favour of the Gospel. The sense of all which is, that by sticking to the old Covenant of Circumcision, they deprive themselves of all the benefit of the new Covenant, into which we are now initiated by Baptism.

But, 3dly, why did these Teachers, who were in a great measure brought over to Christianity, so far comply with the Jews, as to preach and press Circumcision on the Gentile Converts? Why that, the Apostle tells us, was *only lest they should suffer Persecution for the Cross of Christ*. There was at that time a great Persecution rais'd against the Christians: the Jews, out of their great Zeal to the old Law, would not hear of a new Gospel; the Doctrine of *Christ crucify'd was to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks Foolishness*: which made them persecute this Way even to the Death. Hence some for fear of Punishment, and others for the reproach of the Cross, revolted from Christianity, and fell back to the old Law: and we are told of these in our Text, that they adher'd to Circumcision merely to avoid Persecution. 'Twas not any conscientious Persuasion of the Obligation of the Law, that mov'd them thus to keep to it: for the next Verse tells us, that *they themselves that are circumcis'd, do not keep the Law in other matters*; yea, sometimes can dispense with that too, when it may be done with safety. *But they desire to have you circumcis'd* (saith he) *only that they may glory in your Flesh*: meaning, that the true Reason of all this was their own Advantage, and their own Glory; partly to avoid the Fury and Trouble of the Jewish Zealots, and partly that they might be able to boast of the many Profelytes they had made to the Judaical Law. This is that *fair Shew in the Flesh*, mention'd before, and their *glorying in your Flesh*, mention'd here; both which signify, their getting some Glory and Interest to themselves, by having you circum-

But

But these Mens seeking for Glory by such sinister and indirect ways, and shrinking from the Doctrine of the Cross for fear of Persecution, made St. Paul let them know, that all true Glory lies in other things; namely, in a firm Constancy of Mind, and a steady Adherence to the Doctrine of Christ against all Opposition: And therefore he speaks in his own Name in the following Verse, saying, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus, by whom the World is crucify'd to me, and I unto the World.* That is, all Glorifying in the Flesh is vain, and all Boasting of worldly Wealth and Honour is fruitless and insignificant; such idle Vaunts and Vain-glorying as this, proceed only from the fond Suggestions and Compliances of false Teachers, who make merchandize of you: but God forbid (saith the Apostle) that I should ever make use of these or any other like Arts to beguile you, or to draw Disciples into such pernicious Errors and Delusions. The only true matter of Boasting is in the Cross of Christ, which they would make you either afraid or asham'd of. For my own part (saith he) I know nothing worthy to be glory'd of or rejoic'd in, save that only: and accordingly all my Joy and Rejoicing is in my Constancy to my Saviour, and the Sufferings I have undergone for his sake; which have made the Pleasures, Honours, and Riches of the World altogether lifeless and untempting to me, and likewise me as dead and mortify'd to any inordinate Love or Desire of them. Hence we find him declaring to the Romans, that he was *not asham'd of the Gospel of Christ, which is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth*; Rom. 1. 16. Whatever mean Thoughts others might have of it, or whatever Reflections they might cast upon it, he was so far from being asham'd, that he made it the Object of his greatest Glory and Rejoicing, knowing it to be the only Way and Means of obtaining Life and Salvation.

Again, He told the Corinthians, that he determin'd to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and him crucify'd; 1 Cor. 2. 2. And to the Philippians he affirm'd, that he counted all other Knowledg but as Loss and Dung, in comparison of the Excellency of the Knowledg of Christ, for whom he had suffer'd the Loss of all, and counted it as nothing, that he might win Christ; Phil. 3. 8. He had been before mentioning the Privileges of Circumcision, in which he could pretend as great a share as any: for he was *circumcis'd the eighth Day, according to the Law given to Abraham*; he

was of the Stock of Israel, of the Tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the Law a Pharisee; ver. 5. And yet all these Privileges he reckon'd of no worth or value to him without an Interest in Christ, which was infinitely above them all. And therefore he here tells the *Galatians*, that all insisting on these Privileges, and all other Contests about the Law are frivolous and to no purpose; *For in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature.* Now under the Gospel 'tis not material whether a Man be circumcis'd or no, for he can be the better for neither: that which is now requir'd, is to be regenerate by Baptism, to be born again of Water and the Holy Ghost, and thereby to become new Creatures: and such must all be that come to Christ; *For if any Man be in Christ (saith the Apostle) he is a new Creature; old things are past away, behold all things are become new.* 2 Cor. 5. 17. The old sinful Practices are to be laid aside, and the antiquated Rites of the Law to be done away, and we enter upon a new State that obliges to Newness of Life: For the Gospel brings a Change of Things and Persons from what they were before; there is more Grace, better Promises, greater Assistances, and ampler Encouragements than were made known before; all which call upon us to lead better Lives, and so to become new Creatures.

And as many as walk according to this Rule, Peace be on them and Mercy, and upon the whole Israel of God. Which words may be understood either as a Wish, that all who lead their Lives by these measures, and walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ, may have all Peace and Mercy multiply'd upon them; or else as a Promise, that they who do so, shall certainly find all that Peace and Happiness, which the Gospel exhibits and holds forth to them. Both which Prayer and Promise is here made, not only for those who newly embrac'd the Faith of the Gospel, but for the whole *Israel of God*, that believe on him, whether they be Jew or Gentile, Bond or Free, for they are all one in Christ Jesus.

Having said this to them, he adds in the following words, *From henceforth let no Man trouble me, for I bear in my Body the Marks of the Lord Jesus:* that is, for the future I desire that none would give me any farther trouble in this matter, for I have other work to do, which by my Office I am bound to attend and discharge. And there can be no reason

Epistle for the 15th Sunday after Trinity. 341

son to cause any more Vexation to me; for I have already felt those Afflictions in my Body, which in some measure resemble the Sufferings of Christ, and are so many Marks and Tokens of my Sincerity and Constancy to him.

And then he closes all with this Salutation, *Brethren, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit. Amen.* With this Prayer he begins and ends most of his Epistles, which contains his hearty Wish for the Prosperity both of Body and Soul, and that all the Favours and Blessings of Heaven, both temporal and spiritual, may be multiply'd upon them: which Wish we ought all to have for all our Fellow-Christians.

This is the Sum of the Epistle for this Day, from whence we may learn the following Lessons: And,

1. From *St. Paul's* writing so large a Letter with his own Hand, we may learn to spare no pains for the Satisfaction of doubting Christians, and to rescue them from the evil Arts and Designs of Deceivers. We see what pains the Apostle here takes with these *Galatians*, to keep them steady to the Truths of the Gospel, and to arm them against those Judaizing Teachers, that would urge Circumcision upon them, and introduce other abolish'd Rites of *Moses's* Law. With the like Care and Diligence ought we to instruct ignorant and deluded People in the Faith of Christ, to reduce those to the Unity of the Christian Church that have stray'd from it, and to preserve them from the Errors and Insinuations of false Teachers, that labour to seduce them.

2. From *St. Paul's* Discourse here, we may learn to stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be intangled again in the Yoke of Bondage. *St. Luke* tells us, that the Church sometime groan'd under a heavy and burdensome Yoke of carnal Ordinances, such as neither they nor their Forefathers were able to bear: from this Yoke Jesus Christ hath happily deliver'd his Church, having blotted out the Hand-writing of Ordinances that was against us, and rescu'd us from the beggarly Rites and Rudiments of the Ceremonial Law, and particularly the painful Rite of Circumcision. Let us not then suffer our selves to be again brought in Bondage to these things; Christ being the sole Master of our Faith, let us not become the Servants of Men. This Advice *St. Paul* frequently gave in most of his Epistles; which yet we must not strain so far,

as to think all comely Ceremonies relating to Time, Place, and Gesture, to be now forbidden in the Service of God; for without some of these, it cannot be perform'd in that Decency and Order that is requir'd: but that we are not to return again to the *Mosaical* Ceremonies and Sacrifices, which being Types and Shadows of good things to come, must vanish and cease at the coming of them. Inasmuch that we are now call'd to no other Circumcision, save that of the Heart, nor to offer up any other Calves than those of the Lips: for *we are the Circumcision* (saith the Apostle) *that worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no Confidence in the Flesh.* Phil. 3. 3.

3. From what hath been said, we may learn not to shrink from the Faith for fear of Persecution, but rather with our Apostle to glory in the Cross of Christ, by which we shall be crucify'd to the World, and the World to us. We read in this Epistle of some that press'd Circumcision, for fear of displeasing the Jews, and suffering by them: but St. Paul stood his ground, and fear'd nothing; he would not forsake the Truths of the Gospel for all their Threats, but rather courted than fear'd the Cross in Christ's Cause: *I am ready* (saith he) *not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus;* Acts 21. 13. He prefer'd his Sufferings at Jerusalem, before all their Triumphs at Rome; and valu'd the Cross of Christ above all the Trophies of the greatest Conqueror: which should teach us all Courage and Constancy in his Cause, and to be above the Frowns and Menaces of the greatest Enemies; knowing that the Cross is set in the way to a Crown, and if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorify'd together.

4. We learn here, that no external Privileges or Advantages are sufficient of themselves to bring us to Heaven; for in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature; nor will Baptism, or any other Gospel-Privileges, do us any service, without a true Faith, and the Answer of a good Conscience.

5. They that walk by the Rules of the Gospel, shall find Peace and Mercy heap'd upon them; and so shall the whole *Israel* of God, both Jew and Gentile, for there is no difference.

Lastly, Since the Gospel of Christ is attended with Trouble and Persecution, let us make the Yoke as easy as we can to one another; and since the best suffer much by
the

the profess'd Enemies of Christianity, let them not find any additional Troubles from its Friends and Professors. This is St. Paul's Request in his own and others behalf, *From henceforth, let no Man trouble me, for I bear in my Body the Marks of the Lord Jesus*; which honourable Scars I esteem higher than the greatest Marks and Badges of worldly Glory: And if we can do so, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with our Spirits. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XLI.

The GOSPEL for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

St. Matthew vi. 24, to the end.

No Man can serve two Masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your Life, &c.

THE Design of this Gospel, is to take off Mens Hearts from an inordinate Love and Pursuit of the perishing things of this World, and to place them upon a more lasting and substantial Treasure in Heaven. But because some may be apt to say, that they consist of a Body as well as a Soul, and they must provide for both, and they have a want of good things for the one in this Life, as well as for the other in the next, and so must divide their Care and Affections between them:

To these our Saviour here replies, *No Man can serve two Masters, &c.* Which he here proves, because the loving of the one, will be the hating of the other; and the holding to the one, will be the despising of the other. And then applies it to the present Case, *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* The rest of the Chapter is an Inference from this, and an Enlargement upon it: of which in their order. And,

First, Of the Proposition here laid down ; *No Man can serve two Masters.* This will be evident to any, that considers the Properties and Duties of a good Servant.

The first whereof is Obedience, which is the doing the Master's Will, which cannot be done to two ; especially, if they interfere as to Time, and the Matter of their Commands. If both lay their Commands at the same time, or if one commands one thing, and the other another, 'twill be impossible to observe both.

Again, Diligence is another Duty of a Servant, which is the minding and doing his Master's Business ; *Not with Eye-service, as Men-pleasers, but with Sincerity and Singleness of Heart* : being as well employ'd out of the Master's sight, as when his Eye is upon him. Now this cannot be to two Masters ; for if one behold him doing his Work, the other must necessarily see him neglecting his, it being impossible to be doing both at the same time.

Moreover, Fidelity is another Duty and Property of a good Servant, which cannot be to two Masters, for a Servant owes his whole Service to his Master ; and none can give his whole Service to two, for what is given to the one, must be taken from the other ; and if one hath all, the other can have none ; and consequently none can truly serve or be faithful to two Masters.

But our Saviour's Arguments here are both of them irrefragable.

1st, Because no Man can love two Masters as he ought, for if he love the one, he will hate the other. Love is of an uniting Nature ; if it be center'd in one Object, 'tis commonly true and lasting ; but if it be divided among more, it becomes weak, and soon turns into Hatred. And therefore the Apostle wills us neither to be, nor to have many Masters ; for that will divide the Affections, and instead of Love and Kindness, will breed Enmity and Dislike.

2dly, No Man can be constant to two Masters ; for to hold to the one, will be to despise the other. The Mind cannot equally incline to two Objects, but like the Scales of a Ballance, the raising of one will be the lowering of the other. In this Case, there is no holding the Scales even ; the more the one rises in Esteem, the more the other sinks, and the sticking to the one will be unavoidably accompanied with the falling off from the other. This is evident both in the Theory and the Practice. From whence I proceed to

The

The Application that Christ here makes of it, *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, that is, God and the World ; and that for all the foremention'd Reasons. As,

(1.) Ye cannot be true and faithful to God and Mammon ; for we owe unto God our whole Service both of Body, Soul, and Spirit, which are all his, and must be intirely devoted to his Service : and indeed all the Service we can pay him, falls vastly short of what is due to him. And if all our Service be his, we must be unfaithful in giving any to another ; and consequently we rob God of all that which is given to Mammon. Again,

2dly, Ye cannot love God and Mammon : so St. John expressly tells us, *If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him* ; 1 John 2. 15. These two are as inconsistent as Light and Darknes, and can no more agree together than Christ and Belial. We are commanded to *love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our Strength*. And if God must have all, there can be none left for Mammon.

3dly, Ye cannot fear and honour God and Mammon ; for all our Fear and all our Honour is to be directed and fix'd on God only, and none is to be fear'd and honour'd but in relation to him. This we find him challenging from us, *If I am a Father, where is my Honour ? if a Master, where is my Fear ? saith the Lord of Hosts : Mal. 1. 6*. We are bid to fear God, and none beside him ; and he is so jealous of his Honour, that he will not share it with Mammon, nor give his Glory to any other.

Lastly, Ye cannot obey God and Mammon ; for their Commands are directly contrary and inconsistent with each other, and therefore 'tis impossible to serve both. God calls for our whole Heart ; Mammon is for dividing it, and would be content with a part, knowing that thereby he shall have all : for God will have all or none, he loves a broken, but hates a divided Heart. God calls to Holiness and all Purity of Conversation, Mammon to Uncleanness and all Superfluity of Naughtiness. God calls to Truth and Honesty in all our Words and Actions, Mammon to Fraud and Double-dealing. God calls to Acts of Mercy and Charity, Mammon to Cruelty and Oppression. God calls to Patience and Contentment in all Conditions, Mammon to Murmuring and Purloining. Lastly, God calls to Peace and Unity in his Church, Mammon to Discord and
Divi-

Divisions. And who can obey such opposite and irreconcilable Commands? These, and many more Inconsistencies, that may be found in these two Masters, render it altogether impossible to serve both; which plainly shews the Truth of what is here affirm'd, *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* From whence I proceed, in the next place,

To the Inference our Saviour here draws from it, in these words: *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your Body, what ye shall put on. Therefore,* that is, since you cannot serve two Masters, God and Mammon, I give you this Caution, not to divide your Thoughts between them, but to take off your Thoughts from the World, and to fix them wholly upon God. The word here render'd, *Take no thought*, in the Original signifies to divide the Mind; and so 'tis a Caution against Dubiousness and Perplexity of Mind. Be not divided or distracted in your Thoughts between these two, but take no thought for the World, or the Concerns of it, and let all your Thoughts and Desires be plac'd on God and the things of Heaven; saying with *David, Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire in comparison of thee.*

But must we then cast off all Thoughts about the World? What then will become of our Lives and our Bodies? How shall we feed the one, and clothe the other, which cannot be without some Care and Thoughts about these worldly Matters? In answer to this, our Saviour does not bid us to cast off all Thoughts of these things, but only to think and labour for them in the way of God's Appointment. Our Thoughts are chiefly to dwell upon God and the things above, and on earthly things only in Subordination to him, and according to his Order and Direction: and this is not forsaking God, and revolting to the World; but we serve God in thus serving Mammon and our selves, when we do it so as he hath allow'd and directed in his Word. So that the taking no thought about Food and Rayment is to be meant,

1st, Of taking no disquieting or perplexing Thoughts about them, such as rack the Mind, and in a manner eat out the Heart; thereby wasting and weakning the Body, to get the Means of preserving it. Again,

2^{dly}, Here are forbidden all doubting and distrustful Thoughts about Food and Rayment, such as cause Men to question the Truth and Faithfulness of God's Promises, and
doubt

doubt his Care and Willingness to provide Necessaries for them: like the murmuring *Israelites*, *Can God prepare a Table in the Wilderness, and can he give Bread and Flesh to his People?* Which distrustful Thoughts are a great Dishonour unto God, and a vile Reproach both to his Power and Goodness.

3dly, Our Saviour condemns here all unjust and deceitful Thoughts, such as set Men a coveting and invading another's Substance, putting them upon over-reaching or going beyond their Brother in any matter, and seeking to enrich themselves upon the Spoils of their Neighbour. All taking of such Thoughts for the World is a plain leaving of God, and substituting our own Providence in the room of his, and consequently 'tis a serving of Mammon more than our Maker.

In short, there is a Care of Diligence that puts Men upon all regular and honest Ways of getting a comfortable Livelihood, by depending on God's Blessing in the Use of all good Means, and quietly submitting the Success of all unto God. This is not only lawful, but laudable and necessary, and is a great part of our Duty, both as we are Men, and as we are Christians.

Beside which, there is a Care of Diffidence, that fills Men with unreasonable Fears and Torments about getting these earthly things, and leads them to all the evil Methods of Fraud and Injustice to bring them to pass, distracting their Minds about the Issue and Event of Matters, and destroying all the Comfort of their Lives in seeking these worldly Comforts. Such a carking Infidelity as this usurps upon God, by casting off all Thoughts of his Blessing and Providence, and is not serving God but Mammon: whereas we are taught to moderate our Desires and Endeavours for these things, and to banish all anxious and doubting Thoughts about them. For to cark too much, is to distrust God; not to care at all, is to tempt him; by the one we invade God's part, by the other we neglect our own: both which are highly displeasing and offensive to him. This is briefly the Sense of our Saviour's Caution, *Take no thought for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor for your Body, what ye shall put on*: which is, not to be too thoughtful or solicitous about Food and Rayment. And because Men are too apt to fall into this Evil, he uses sundry Arguments to dissuade them from it: As,

348 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

(1.) In the next words he asks the Question, *Is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Rayment?* which is an Argument *a majore ad minus*, or a Reasoning from a greater thing to a less. If God hath given us Life, which is the greatest of all Gifts, how can we doubt his giving us Meat, which is far less? Is it not easier to support Life, than it was to give it? And can it be suppos'd that he who hath done the latter, will not do the former? Again, *Is not the Body more than Rayment?* Is not the Body, which is so curiously and wonderfully made in all its Parts, far more considerable than a little Rayment to cover it? And can we think that he who hath given us the one, will deny the other? But the better to prevail with us, and to banish all Distrust in these Matters, he enlarges himself in the following words, by giving us many Instances of his Care in this kind: And first for Food, he sends us to the Fowls of the Air, *Behold (saith he) the Fowls of the Air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns, and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.* To remove all anxious Thoughts for Meat and Drink, he wills us to look up to the Birds of the Air, and consider how well they are provided for, and how chearfully they live upon the Bounty of Providence, and that too without any labour or pain of their own: instead of filling their Heads with Care, they fill the Air with the Melody of their warbling Notes; and instead of gathering into Barns, they gather Food from all parts of the Earth, and make every Garden their Granary. *They neither sow nor reap, they are at no labour in Tillage or Husbandry, neither putting the Corn into the Ground, nor taking it out, and yet they want for nothing; Your heavenly Father feedeth them.* And then he asks the Question, *Are ye not better than they?* Where, as he before argu'd from the greater to the less, so here he reasons from the less to the greater: Is not Man the most excellent of all Creatures, being made Lord of the whole Creation? Hath not God subjected all other Creatures under his feet, and design'd them for his Use? And if his Providence extends to these inferior Creatures, we may well think it will not be withheld from us, who are so far above them: *Are not two Sparrows sold for a Farthing (saith our Saviour) and yet not one of them falleth to the Ground without your heavenly Father: Fear ye not then, for ye are of more value than many Sparrows; Mat. 10. 29, 30, &c.* To this our Saviour subjoins another Question, *Which of you by taking thought can*

ada

add one Cubit to his Stature? The Stature of the Body, whether taller or shorter, is much less than the Welfare of the Body, and the Length or Shortness of Life is of less consideration than Life it self: and if, with all our care, we cannot add an Inch to the Dimensions of the Body, nor a Minute to the Length of our Life, which is the less; how can we think we are able to provide for the Welfare of both, which is much greater? Yea, our Saviour tells us, we cannot make one Hair white or black; and is it not much better to depend upon the Providence of God, who can do all things, than upon our own selves, who can do nothing? Then,

(2.) For Rayment, he sends us to the Lillies and Flowers of the Field; saying, *Why take ye thought for Rayment? Consider the Lillies of the Field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, Solomon in all his Glory was not array'd like one of these.* The natural Beauty of the Lilly and the Rose exceed all the artificial Colours and Embroidery of the gaudiest Attire, and nothing of the most affected Pomp and Bravery of Princes can equal or compare with it. The Grass of the Field is sometimes clothed in that pleasant Verdure, that at once refreshes and ravishes the Eye of the Beholder; and many Flowers appear in that scarlet, crimson and purple Dress, that far out-vies the most costly and artificial Finery: insomuch that Solomon, in all his Glory and gorgeous Attire, which was as great as the Wealth and Wisdom of the World could set him out with, was not array'd like one of these. Which natural Gayety is entirely the Work of God, and bestow'd upon them without any Care or Labour of theirs; for they toil not, neither do they spin, nor contribute any thing to the Glory and Splendor wherein they appear. The most exquisite Works of Art are but faint Resemblances and Imitations of these of Nature: No Pencil can draw a Paleness or Redness comparable to those of the Lilly and the Rose; and therefore the Holy Ghost, to set forth the Glory and Beauty of the Church, compares it to the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilly of the Vallies.

Wherefore if God so clothe the Grass of the Field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the Oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith? If he hath made such rich and glorious Provision for those short-liv'd Flowers, that were design'd only for our Delight and Diversion, will he not do much more for his own Children, who are so much

much above them? Sure we may well be accounted Men of little Faith, if we doubt these things. In short, both the Fowls of the Air, and the Flowers of the Field, may teach us to banish all distrustful Thoughts of Food and Rayment, and to depend upon God in the Use of Means for the Supply of them.

From hence our Saviour takes occasion, in the next words, to renew his former Caution; *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?* Adding withal two farther Reasons:

1st, Because 'tis the Guise and Practice of the Heathens to be solicitous in these Matters; *For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.*

2^{dly}, Because our Care about them is needless; *For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

As for the Gentiles, they, wanting the Knowledg of God, and serving those impotent Deities, that neither know their Wants, nor are able to supply them, 'tis no strange thing, if they cark and toil for themselves, who have no Sense or Notion of a Providence to take care of them: But for Christians, who are better instructed, and fully satisfy'd of the Being and Providence of God, who presides over, and provides for all his Creatures, it must be an unreasonable and unpardonable Diffidence in them, to question his Power, or distrust his Readiness to help them: especially considering what is here farther added, that *our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things.* Where the Relation we bear to him as our heavenly Father, and the Sense he hath of all our Wants, are sufficient to engage us to cast all our Care upon him, who careth for us. A Father, you know, cannot see his Children lack Necessaries, especially if he be able to relieve them: Why, our heavenly Father is able not only to supply all our Necessities, but to do for us abundantly more than we can either ask or think, and hath declar'd his great Willingness and Readiness to do so; for if earthly Parents are willing to give good things to their Children, how much more will your Father that is in Heaven give good things to them that ask them? Which is enough to make us follow the Apostle's Advice, *To be careful for nothing, but in all things, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, to make our Requests known unto God: Phil. 4. 6.*

But may we not then seek these earthly things, but rely wholly upon Divine Providence for the obtaining of them?

them? Why, that our Saviour answers in the next words, *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* If your principal Care and Labour be employ'd about heavenly Matters, you shall not want a sufficient Portion of earthly things, they shall be added as Vantage to a Bargain, or as a Viaticum to carry you on thro this World in the way to a better. *David* tells us, that tho the Lions may lack and suffer Hunger, yet they that fear the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good; for God will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he withhold from him that leads a godly Life: and therefore our Saviour bids his Disciples not to *labour for the Meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to eternal Life*; that is, our Labour for the one should be nothing in comparison to the other.

But may we not lay up something for the Casualties of Times, and provide for the future? That our Saviour answers in the last words of the Chapter; *Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of it self*: He that provides for you to-day will do the same to-morrow, and therefore do not forestal Evils by any anxious Fears and Cares about them; *for sufficient to the Day is the Evil thereof.*

Thus I have gone thro the Gospel for this Day; from which we may learn many Lessons: I shall mention only two. And,

1st, Since we cannot serve two Masters, God and Mammon, let us chuse this Day the Service of God, and resolve with *Joshua*, that *whatever others do, I and my House will serve the Lord*; Josh. 24. To which we are encourag'd, he being the best of Masters, that sets his Servants on the best of Work, and pays them the best of Wages. But because Mammon or the World is apt to put in for a share of our Service, and to entice us from God's Service, under a pretence of providing Necessaries for our selves here; let us learn,

2dly, To put our Trust in God, and to cast our selves upon his Providence in the way of his own Appointment; and by thus committing our selves and our Ways unto him, he will bring things to pass, that tend to our Ease and Comfort here, and our eternal Happiness hereafter: Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XLII.

The EPISTLE for the Sixteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

Eph. iii. 13, to the end.

*I desire that ye faint not at my Tribulations for you,
which is your Glory. For this cause I bow my
Knees unto the Father of the Lord Jesus, &c.*

THE Collect for this Day teaches us to implore the Divine Pity to purify and protect his Church; and because it cannot continue in Safety without his Succour, we beseech him to preserve it evermore by his Help and Goodness.

In the Epistle for the Day we have an Account of St. Paul's praying thus in the behalf of the Church of *Ephesus*; which Epistle begins with his Request to these *Ephesians*, and is continu'd with his Prayer for them, and concludes with his Doxology, or praising God in their behalf: each of which must be particularly consider'd. And,

First, Of the Request that St. Paul here makes to these Ephesians, in those words, I desire that ye faint not at my Tribulations for you, which is your Glory. The Apostle had endur'd many and great Afflictions for their sake; for he, being the Apostle of the Gentiles, ordain'd and sent to preach the Gospel to them, was for that reason mightily oppos'd and persecuted by the Jews, who judg'd it unlawful to preach to any but those of their own Church and Nation; and no wonder, this being a Mystery not known to former Ages, who were so far from preaching to the Gentiles, that they look'd upon them as Aliens and Outcasts, and thought it unlawful to converse or have any thing to do with them. Yea, this Mystery was hidden from the very Angels, as we read *ver. 10. of this Chapter*: 'Twas first reveal'd to St. Peter, *Acts 10.* who preach'd to the Gentiles; for which he was blam'd by the rest of the Apostles,

Apostles, and the Brethren of the Circumcision, as we read *Acts* 11. And here in this Chapter St. Paul tells us, it was reveal'd to him, who was made a Minister of this Dispensation of the Grace of God, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ. This he did to these *Ephesians*, who were some of the Gentile Converts, to whom he was sent, and for so doing he was made a Prisoner, and suffer'd great Persecution: so he tells them, *ver. 1. For this cause I Paul am made a Prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.* Now lest they should be discourag'd by his Troubles for their sakes, and fall back again to Judaism and Circumcision by his Bonds, he desires them here *not to faint at his Tribulations for them*; nor be any ways troubled at any thing that might befall him in their Cause, which he tells them was *their Glory*, and therefore should be rather matter of Glorifying and Rejoicing, than of Sorrow and Despondency to them, that God should raise up and commission him to instruct them in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, and likewise to enable him to do and suffer any thing for their Conversion and Salvation; which is a Cordial strong enough to keep them from fainting under his or their own Afflictions. And having thus endeavour'd to raise their Spirits by this Request to them, he proceeds,

Secondly, To his Prayers and falling upon his Knees for them; *For this Cause* (saith he) *I bow my Knees unto the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family of Heaven and Earth is nam'd, that he would grant you, &c.* Where we may observe,

1st, The Cause or Occasion of his praying for them; *For this Cause.*

2dly, The humble Posture he us'd in his Prayers; for this Cause *I bow my Knees.*

3dly, The Object to whom his Prayer was directed; *To the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.*

4thly, The Subject-matter of his Prayer, in the following part of this Epistle.

1st, For the Cause or Occasion of his Prayer, that is imply'd in the words, *For this Cause*; which relates to what went before, namely, to keep them from fainting at his Tribulations for them: That they might not stumble or be offended at the Cross of Christ, which he and they might meet with in his Cause; that they might neither faint nor

fall away at any Troubles that might happen to either. This was the Occasion and Opportunity he made use of to offer up his Prayers in the behalf of these *Ephesians*; and gives us to understand, that in times of Difficulty and Trouble we are to put up our Prayers for Grace and Strength to bear them. Afflictions and Troubles are apt to sink the Spirits, and our natural Weakness is such, that without the Divine Succour we cannot stand upright; times of Trouble are times of Trial, and the Faith of many hath fail'd in the Furnace of Affliction. We read of some, that in time of *Temptation fell away*, and when *Persecution arose*, by reason of the Word, by and by they were offended. And therefore we must especially at such times pray to be preserv'd from Impatience and Apostacy, and to be kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation. This is a proper Season to make our Requests known unto God, that we may be enabled to stand in the evil Day, and be in nothing terrify'd by our Adversaries, which will be our Glory. This the Apostle here did for the *Ephesians*, and we find him doing the same in the behalf of the *Philippians*; for he being then a Prisoner at Rome, and fearing lest their Faith should be shaken by his Bonds, prays for them that they might stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind striving together for the Faith of the Gospel: Phil. i. 27, 28. This was the Cause or Motive of the Apostle's Prayer; which may teach us to do the same upon the like occasion, viz. to pray for Constancy and Perseverance in times of Persecution, that our Faith be not shock'd by our own or others Sufferings: And for this we have both a Precept, and a Promise of Encouragement from God himself, saying, *Call upon me in the time of Trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt praise me*; Psal. 50. 12. From the Occasion of the Apostle's Prayer I proceed,

2dly, To the humble Posture us'd by him in it, and that was Kneeling; for this cause *I bow my Knees*. This Circumstance is here taken notice of, to recommend it to our Imitation. St. Paul did not, as too many in our days do, sit at his Prayers, or present his Maker with a rude unmannerly Devotion; no, he shew'd more Reverence, and bowed his Knees before him. Sitting (we know) is a Posture of Ease and Sloth, and betokens that Freedom and Familiarity which may well enough pass among Equals, but is never us'd as a Gesture of Reverence or Respect to Superiors. We count it a great Rudeness to sit in the Presence

sence of a great Man, and never present a Petition to a Prince but upon our Knees; and shall we shew less Reverence to God Almighty, than we are wont to do to our Fellow-Creatures? The Prophet *Malachi* brings in the Almighty upbraiding the Irreverence of such as present him with the *Lame*, and the *Blind*, and other indecent Sacrifices; bidding them *go and offer it to their Governors, and see whether they would accept their Persons, or be pleased with such Services*: *Mal. 1. 8.* And shall we think that good enough for the great Majesty of Heaven and Earth, which would be reckon'd an Affront to earthly Magistrates? If we consult the Precepts and Precedents of former times, we shall find the Practice of good Men in all Ages to be kneeling, standing, or prostrating, but never sitting at their Prayers. *David* calls upon all that will draw nigh to God, *to worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker*; *Psal. 95. 6.* Accordingly we find *King Solomon kneeling upon his Knees before the Altar of the Lord, and spreading up his Hands to Heaven*; *1 Kings 8. 54.* And the same is affirm'd of him in *2 Chron. 6. 13.* *Daniel* is said to *kneel upon his Knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as his Custom was*; *Dan. 6. 10.* But lest any should think this only an Old-Testament Ceremony, we find in the Gospel our Blessed Saviour *upon his Knees, praying to his heavenly Father*; *Luke 22. 41.* And generally they that address'd to him for Mercy *kneeled down and prayed*, as we read *Mat. 17. 14.* *Mark 1. 40.* *St. Stephen's Prayer for his Persecutors was upon his Knees*; *Acts 7. 60.* and so was *St. Peter's*, *Acts 9. 40.* *St. Paul* here is *bowing his Knees unto God*; and elsewhere tells us, that *at the Name of Jesus, which is mention'd in every Prayer, every Knee should bow*; *Phil. 2. 10.* 'Twere endless to recite the many places to this purpose.

And now methinks so many Precepts and Examples for this humble Posture of Kneeling should teach us better Manners, than to sit at our Prayers; especially considering, that the Church, whereof we are Members, hath likewise requir'd this lowly Gesture from us: whereas that other of Sitting hath no where any Precept or Precedent to countenance it.

Indeed the adorable Greatness of the Divine Majesty is sufficient to check all manner of Irreverence in our Approaches to him; and a due Sense of his infinite Distance from us would oblige us to all Humility of Body and Mind,

and keep us from making too bold either in our Words or Gestures, when we address to him.

I have spoken the more of this, to convince you (if possible) of the Evil and Indecency of this Practice, and to persuade you to greater Reverence and Humility in the House of God; *who is greatly to be fear'd in the Assemblies of his Saints, and to be had in reverence of all that draw nigh to him.* From the Gesture used by the Apostle in his Prayer, I proceed,

3dly, To the Object to whom it was directed; and that was, to the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family of Heaven and Earth is named.* Where the Object of our Prayers is describ'd, not by the lofty Stile of *God Almighty, or the most High*, which is apt to make us dread, and keep at a distance from him; but by the endearing Title of *Father*, to encourage us to draw nigh to him; and the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who is thereby not only his Son, but our Saviour and elder Brother, to beget the greater Trust and Confidence in him by that near Relation.

He then who sent his only-begotten Son to die for us, and he who hath begotten us again to a lively Hope by his Resurrection from the Dead; he it is, to whom our Prayers are to be directed: 'Tis not to Saints or Angels, or the Virgin *Mary*, as the manner of some is, for which we have not the least Direction or Encouragement, they being but Creatures like our selves, and unable either to hear or help us. 'Tis God only that *heareth Prayers*, and gives the Return of them; and therefore *to him alone must all Flesh come.*

But tho God the Father be the principal Object of our Prayers, yet God the Son is the Mediator, in whose Name and for whose Merits we are to offer them up to him: and therefore our Church hath taught us to conclude all our Prayers with the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ; *of whom (as the next words tell us) the whole Family of Heaven and Earth is named.* Where by the *whole Family of Heaven and Earth* is meant the whole Catholick Church, Part whereof is triumphant in Heaven, and Part still militant here on Earth: and this militant part here on Earth, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, by the Grace of the Gospel incorporated into one Family, are all call'd by the Name of Christ, and from him stiled Christians.

4thly,

Epistle for the 16th Sunday after Trinity. 357

4thly, From the Object, pass we next to the Subject Matter of the Apostle's Prayer, or what it was he ask'd in the behalf of these *Ephesians*. And that was first in general, for spiritual Strength or Grace to support them under their Infirmities, and to carry them above Temptations; that God would grant them according to the *Riches of his Glory, to be strengthen'd with Might by his Spirit in the inner Man*. Where by the *inner Man* we are to understand the Heart, Mind, or Soul, as 'tis distinguish'd from the Body, which is call'd the outward Man: to be *strengthen'd with Might in it*, is to be furnish'd with inward Power and Ability to perform all holy Duties, and to be fortify'd against all the Assaults of our ghostly Enemies. This inward Strength is here said to be given by God's *Holy Spirit*, the Author and Bestower of all Grace, who according to the *Riches of his Glory*, or the Treasures of his abundant Mercy, is alone able and willing to supply us upon all occasions, as our Necessities shall require. So that the thing in general here pray'd for, is such a Firmness of Mind, or such a stable Frame of Spirit, as might carry them with Courage and Constancy thro all the Stages of our Christian Course; being enabled to practise all those Vertues that adorn our Profession, and to avoid all those Vices that tend to disparage and defeat the Design of it. More particularly, he here prays,

1st, For the Grace of Faith, in the next words; that *Christ might dwell in their Hearts by Faith*: that is, that they might be so firmly built up in the Knowledg and Faith of Christ, that their Hearts might become the *Habitation of God through the Spirit*, Eph. 2. 22. To dwell (you know) is to take up an abode with another, and implies Continuance; not calling there as a Stranger or Traveller, but abiding as an Inhabitant, and making it his place of Residence. This our Saviour promis'd his Disciples, that *he and his Father would come unto them, and make their abode with them*, John 14. 23. Now *Christ's dwelling in the Heart* is here said to be by the Grace of Faith; for that makes us adhere to him, and that will engage him to adhere and abide with us. This therefore the Apostle prays for in the behalf of these *Ephesians*, that they might persevere in the Truth, and continue stedfast in the Faith; and that not an idle, dead, and ineffectual Faith, that is void of good Works, for that profiteth nothing; but such a lively, active, and operative Faith, that hath its Fruit unto Ho-
linefs,

liness, and that will ripen and grow up into eternal Life.

2dly, Another Branch of his Prayer for them, was for the Grace of Love ; and that too not in the outward Show and Flourish, but to be firmly *rooted and grounded in it*; that it may be not in Word and in Tongue only, but in Deed and in Truth. Now the Love here meant, is chiefly the Love of God, that holy Fire that is to be kindled in the Heart, and still kept flaming in the Breast ; and by that we may be enabled in some measure to *comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth and Length, the Depth and Height of the Love of God towards us*. Not that we can take the infinite and unfathomable Dimensions of the Divine Love, which exceed all that we can ask or think ; but that we may arrive as far in it, as our Faculties will reach, and where they fail, we are to admire and adore the unsearchable Riches of it.

3dly, Another part of the Apostle's Prayer for these *Ephesians*, was for the Knowledg of God, that they might *know the Love of God, which passeth Knowledg* ; ver. 19. Which words seem a Paradox at the first hearing, that he should pray to *know* that, which at the same time he declares to be such as *passeth Knowledg* ; but the Sense of it is, either that he begs to know that, which surpasses all other Knowledg whatsoever, for he counted the Knowledg of all other things but *Loss and Dung* in comparison of the *Excellency of the Knowledg of Christ*, Phil. 3. 8. And therefore he told the *Corinthians*, that he *determin'd to know nothing among them, but Jesus Christ, and him crucify'd* ; 1 Cor. 2. 2. that is, nothing in competition with, or in opposition to it. Or, secondly, to know the Love of God, which *passeth Knowledg*, signifies to know that which our natural Powers cannot reach to the knowledg of, and is to be known only by the supernatural Light of God's Holy Spirit. Or else, thirdly, to know the Love of God, which *passeth Knowledg*, is to know something of that, which at present cannot be perfectly known by us. But whether we understand the Words in all or either of these Senses, this was a noble Subject of the Apostle's Prayers, and will be always worthy of ours : for *this is Life eternal* (saith St. John) *to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent* ; John 17. 3. Our future Happiness will consist much in the Knowledg of God, and therefore we should aim and aspire to it now, and labour to attain to as high a measure of it as we can. To compleat which,

The

The Apostle, in the last place, prays that these *Ephesians* might be filled with all the Fulness of God. Not that 'tis possible to attain to the Measure of the Divine Perfections, or arrive to the Fulness of the Godhead; but that we should endeavour, as far as our Capacities will reach, to be fill'd with the Graces of the Spirit, and particularly with the Knowledg and Love of God, that we may be the better fitted to be fill'd with Glory, which will consist in the Perfection of these and all other Graces: for they who know and love God here, will be known and lov'd by him hereafter, and shall have the eternal Fruition of his glorious Godhead.

These are the chief Heads of *St. Paul's* Prayer for these *Ephesians*, which he here concludes with that excellent Doxology; *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us; unto him be Glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all Ages, World without end. Amen.* Where the better to assure himself and them of the Success of his Petitions, he puts them in mind of the infinite Power and Goodness of God, who is both able and willing to give more than we can crave or conceive; that his Returns will be far beyond our Desires or Deserts, and if we ask in Faith, we need not fear exceeding in our Requests, or asking too much of him: and therefore he would have us, according to our bounden Duty, be ever ready to render him all the Praise and Glory of all his Mercies.

This is the Substance of this Day's Epistle, which contains the following useful and important Lessons.

1. We may learn hence upon all occasions to make our Requests known unto God, the Author and Fountain of all our Mercies; but more especially in times of Trouble and Trial, when we stand in greatest need of his most gracious Aid and Assistance. And this we are here taught to do, not for our selves only, but for all that we are any way related to, or concern'd with, whose Good we ought to have as tender a sense of, as our own; for so we find the Apostle had in all his Epistles, giving those to whom he wrote to understand, that whether present or absent he was always mindful of them in his Prayers.

2. We learn hence, not to think the worse of any Cause, because it may sometimes meet with Opposition and Persecution; for so we find *St. Paul* and the other Apostles did

in propagating the Gospel, tho they had their Commission from Heaven for so doing : and therefore we should not faint or be dismay'd at these things, whensoever we see or hear of them.

3. We are taught from hence, that Patience and Perseverance in times of Trouble and Persecution is wholly the Gift of God, and consequently to him alone we are to address for it ; for all the Strength by which we stand, is not ours, but his, and is to be sought from him. For this cause we find *St. Paul* praying here for himself and others ; and *if any Man lack Wisdom, or Grace to persevere, let him ask it of God, who is willing to give liberally to all Men, and upbraideth not.*

4. We learn hence, that all our Addresses to this purpose must be made with all Humility and Reverence both of Body and Mind : for *St. Paul* here bow'd his Knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in praying for it ; yea, the Example of our Saviour, who kneel'd down and pray'd, the Command of the Apostle requiring every Knee to bow to him, and the Practice of Christians in all Ages, shews this to be the proper Posture of Devotion. We find no Instance in Sacred History of any holy Man that ever sat at his Prayers : and this may teach us to avoid that irreverent and indevout Practice, which by our unhappy Divisions hath lately crept in among us ; and to observe the Psalmist's Call, *to come and worship, and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker.*

5. We are directed here in the Matter, as well as the Manner of our Prayers, and taught for what as well as how to ask ; and that is, for spiritual Strength to arm us against the Power of Temptation, and for Grace to help in time of need. This the Apostle thought necessary to do in the behalf of these *Ephesians* ; and let us make this the Platform of our Devotion both for our selves and others.

Lastly, From the Doxology in the Close, let us learn to all our Prayers to add Praises and Thanksgivings unto God ; adoring his Power, extolling his Goodness, admiring his Wisdom, submitting to his Will, and giving him the Glory of all : so shall we engage the Divine Providence to take care of us, and keep us blameless to the Coming of the Lord Jesus. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XLIII.

The GOSPEL for the Sixteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Luke vii. 11—17.

And it came to pass the day after, that Jesus went into a City call'd Nain, and many of his Disciples went with him, and much People: and when he came nigh unto the City, behold there was a dead Man carry'd out, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives us a Relation of a certain Miracle wrought by our Saviour upon a dead Man, whom he rais'd to Life again, in the view of many Witnesses. Where the Evangelist, in relating of it, takes notice,

First, Of the Circumstance of Time when it was done, in these words, It came to pass the day after; that is, the day after his healing the Centurion's Servant, which was done the day before, as the foregoing part of the Chapter declares: where we read of a Centurion or Officer of the Roman Band, that had a Servant whom he dearly lov'd, who being very sick and ready to die, when he heard of Jesus, came himself, as St. Matthew relates it, or as St. Luke here, sent some of the Elders of the Jews, beseeching him to come and heal his Servant: which is in effect all one, for what a Man does by another, is reckon'd as done by himself. These besought him instantly, saying, he was worthy for whom he should do this, for the good Offices he had done for their Church and Nation. Jesus going to him, was met by the way with this Message; Lord, trouble not thy self, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my Roof, but say the word only, and thy Servant shall be heal'd: believing him to have the same power over Diseases, that he had over his Soldiers, which was only to
give

give the Word of Command, and it would be presently done. Christ perceiving his Faith, marvell'd and commended it, saying, *He had not found so great Faith, no not in Israel.* Whereupon they that were sent, returning to the House, found the *Servant whole that had been sick.* And then follow these words, *And it came to pass the day after, that Jesus went into a City call'd Nain.* Which leads us,

Secondly, From the Circumstance of Time to that of Place, where this Miracle of raising the dead Man was perform'd: it was in the City of *Nain*, a City in *Galilee* famous for little else than the Presence of our Saviour, and this Miracle there wrought by him; and 'twas enough to make any Place remarkable in those days, where Christ or his Apostles did any of their wonderful Works. When Christ went to this City, 'tis said that many of his Disciples went with him, and much People. His Disciples attended him of course, and the Fame of his great Works drew many more after him, who were all Spectators and Eye-witnesses of his Miracles: for they were not done in a corner, where Men may be easily impos'd upon, but in the face of the Sun, and in the sight of great Multitudes. Accordingly this was done here before much People, to satisfy them in the Truth of the Fact, and to confirm their Faith in him. From the Place and Persons present, pass we,

Thirdly, To the Occasion or Motive of Christ's working this Miracle; and that was, his seeing some carrying a dead Man to his Grave, the Mother and others following the Corps with Weeping and sad Lamentation. This is held forth in the next words; *Now when he came nigh to the Gate of the City, behold there was a dead Man carry'd out, the only Son of his Mother, and she was a Widow; and much People of the City was with her.* This dead Man was carry'd out of the City, according to the Custom of those days, which was to carry and bury dead Corps out of the City, to preserve the Inhabitants from the noisom Air and Scent of dead Carcases.

The dead Person that was carry'd out, was the *only Son of his Mother*; which you know is a matter of great Grief and Sorrow, especially to the tender Bowels of a Mother. The Loss of a Child, even where there are more left, is commonly attended with Tears and great Lamentation:
Nature

Gospel for the 16th Sunday after Trinity. 363

Nature it self suggests this to Parents, to be sensibly touch'd and affected with the Death of a Child, having thereby lost a Limb or Part of themselves; but the Loss of an only Child is far more grievous and afflicting, being in effect the Loss of all.

Moreover, to enhance the Sorrow, 'tis added, *And she was a Widow.* It seems she had lost her Husband before, and that was follow'd here with the Loss of her only Son; which was enough to overwhelm her with Grief, and to drown her in Tears of Sorrow.

Again, 'tis said, *And much People of the City was with her;* partly to comfort her in her great Affliction, which is an Office of great Charity, to relieve the Spirits of the Afflicted under their deep Mourning and Sadness, and to bear off some of the Burden, by lamenting and mourning with them: and partly likewise to attend the Funeral, and to accompany the deceas'd Party to the Grave, his Bed of Rest; which is an Act of Piety and great Civility, generally practis'd in all civiliz'd Places and Countries; which is done partly out of respect to the Dead, and partly as a Warning and Example to the Living, to let them know that they must all shortly follow him to the same place. But to proceed,

When our Lord saw her in so much Sorrow and Sadness, bemoaning her desolate and disconsolate Condition, bedewing her Face with Tears, and filling the Air with Sighs and Outcries for the loss of her dear and only Child; 'tis said, he had compassion on her. His Bowels yearn'd towards her, which shew'd it self in pitying her sad and mournful State, and speaking kindly and comfortably to her. Where his Carriage towards her teaches us to have compassion one of another in like cases, to sympathize in each others Afflictions, and to administer Comfort and Cordials suitable to all Mens Distresses. This we find our Saviour did on all occasions: He wept over *Jerusalem*, when he saw them obstinately refusing all the Offers of their Peace and Welfare. He wept at the beholding the extreme Grief and Tears of *Mary and Martha*, for the Death of their Brother *Lazarus*. And here he shew'd great Pity and Compassion at the distressed Condition of this afflicted Widow. *St. Paul* wills us to *weep with them that weep*, as well as to *rejoice with them that rejoice*; and to bear a share, as in the Joys, so in the Sorrows of one another. *Rom. 12.*

But

But our Saviour's Compassion did not vent it self in Tears only, but discover'd it self in kind Words, and kinder Actions: *He said unto her, weep not; that is, cease lamenting the Loss of thy Son, and be of good cheer: He that hath taken him from thee, is able to restore him, or give thee another.* Therefore wipe away thy Tears, and take comfort; immoderate Grief may hurt thy self, but cannot recal thy Son: if thou put thy Faith and Trust in God, he will either repair thy Loss in the same kind, or recompense it with greater Gain. From such comfortable Speeches, he proceeded to more cheering and reviving Actions: which will lead us,

Fourthly, To the Miracle it self, and the Manner of his performing it; which, as the next words declare, was on this wise: As they were carrying this dead Man out of the City to the place of his Burial, our Saviour being then nigh to the Gate of the City, *came to them, and touch'd the Bier; the Bearers the mean time standing still.* And while his Hand was on the Bier, he utter'd these words, saying, *Young Man, I say unto thee, Arise.* Upon which, *he that was dead immediately sate up, and began to speak; and he deliver'd him to his Mother.* Where we may observe,

1st, The Manner or Means used in effecting this Miracle. It was by a Touch of the Bier, and a Word of his Mouth; Means no way proportion'd to such an End, if they were not seconded by a Divine Power, that is able to do all things. 'Tis all one to Omnipotence, to work by any or no means; all things, whether living or dead, upon or under the Earth, readily obey his Call, and come forth at his Word of Command: if he say the Word, the Effect must and will come to pass, for nothing can hinder the Influence of his Power, or resist his Will.

2^{dly}, We may observe here the Certainty of this Miracle. That the dead Man came to Life again, was evident by the vital Actions perform'd by him, for *he sate up, and began to speak; things out of the power of a dead Carcase: and all this in the sight of a great Multitude, who were then doing the last Office of carrying and waiting on him to his Grave.*

3^{dly}, We may observe the Kindness of our Saviour to the mournful Mother, in these words; *And he deliver'd him to his Mother.* With what Joy she receiv'd him at his hands, is a matter better to be imagin'd than express'd: how

how her Heart leap'd for joy, when she saw him sit up, and with what pleasing and greedy Attention she hearken'd unto him when he began to speak; how her Passions were mov'd and heighten'd, no Tongue can utter; and what Exultation of Spirit she felt within her, is out of the reach of words to declare. The Death of her Son had almost brought her to Death's door, and his coming to Life again, put in a manner a new Life into her; she that was before overwhelm'd with Grief, now became transported with Joy; and our Saviour's Compassion for her former Trouble, was no doubt turn'd into a Sympathy of Rejoicing with her.

This is, in brief, the Miracle here recorded in the Gospel for this Day, together with the many remarkable Circumstances that attended it.

But what were the Effects that follow'd after it? Why that the next words declare. As,

1st, *There came a Fear on them all.*

2dly, *They all glorify'd God.*

3dly, *They all said, that a new Prophet was risen up among them, and that God had visited his People.* And,

Lastly, *That this Rumour went of him throughout all Judea, and the Regions round about.*

1st, 'Tis said that *a Fear came on them all.* But why so? One would think rather, that Love should have seiz'd them all upon the sight of so much Goodness; and such a Love too, as should have cast out Fear, and fill'd them with all manner of Joy and Rejoicing.

True, the Goodness of his Works no doubt possess'd them with a great Love of his Person, but the Greatness of his Works struck them with no small Awe and Dread of his Power. They were surpriz'd with Wonder at what they saw, and were fill'd with Astonishment at his great and marvellous Works. This effect we find the Miracles of Christ generally had upon the Minds of the People, to seize them with Amazement and Terror. Upon his curing the deaf and dumb Man, 'tis said the People were beyond measure astonish'd, Mark 7. 37. and here, that *Fear came upon them all*; i. e. they were taken with a sudden Affrightment at that Divine Power, that was able to do such strange and wonderful Works.

But yet, 2dly, their Fear was not so great, as to hinder their Devotion; for the next Words tell us, that *they glorify'd*

rify'd God: meaning, that the Awe and Dread with which they were struck at the sight of this Miracle, put them upon Praises and Acknowledgments unto God of his infinite Power and Goodness, giving him all the Glory of these marvellous and miraculous Acts, and rendring all due Thanks for the Good and Benefit they receiv'd by them. This is a Tribute we owe for all the daily and common Favours of Providence, but much more for these extraordinary and astonishing Acts of his Bounty; saying with the Psalmist, *Unto thy Name be all the Glory*; and *how excellent is thy Name in all the World*!

3dly, The sight of this Miracle done by our Saviour, mov'd all the People with one Voice to say, that *a great Prophet was risen up among them*, and that *God had visited his People*. That a great Prophet was to come, they learnt from the Prophecy reveal'd to *Moses*, Deut. 18. 18. *A Prophet shall the Lord thy God raise up like unto thee, and to him they shall hearken*: which is quoted by the Apostle, Acts 3. 22. & Chap. 7. 37. That this Prophet should come with a Power of working Miracles, such as raising the Dead, and healing all manner of Diseases, they had learnt from the other Prophets; and that the time of his coming was then at hand, they concluded from sundry Prophecies to that purpose.

Now when Christ came doing such great and wonderful Works, and shewing himself a Prophet so *mighty in Word and Deed*, some said, *We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write*, John 1. 45. Others said, *Of a truth this is that Prophet that should come into the World*, John 6. 14. And these in our Text, that *a great Prophet is risen up among us*. This they gather'd partly from the Excellency of his Doctrine, for *no Man* (say they) *ever spake like him*; and partly from the Greatness of his Works, for *no Man* (say others) *ever did the Works that he doth*. And being thus mighty in Word and Deed, they well enough concluded from both, that this was that Prophet or promis'd Messiah, that was to come for the revealing of God's Will, and the Redemption of Mankind: by both which God is here said to *have visited his People*; that is, he hath sent one in our own Nature to pity our Condition, to relieve our Wants, and to visit us with his Salvation: which made *Zachariah* fall a *blessing of God*, for thus *visiting and redeeming his People*, and *raising up a Horn of Salvation for them, out of the House of his Servant David*; Luke 1. 68, &c.

The

The Fame as well as the Benefit of it is gone abroad into the World. And this will lead us to the

Last Thing recorded of this Miracle; and that is, that *this Rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and all the Regions round about.* The Fame of his Miracles, and the Testimony they gave to the Truth of his Messiahship, spread into all parts, insomuch that all *Galilee*, and the Cities of *Judea* and *Palestine*, and all the circumambient Regions round about them, receiv'd the Report of him: which drew many to see and partake of the Benefit of his Miracles, and thereby become Profelytes and Converts to his Doctrine.

Thus we see the Miracle here related in all its Circumstances and Effects, the greatest indeed of all Miracles, which is the raising of a dead Person to Life, the sole Work of a Divine Power and Goodness. It remains only to infer a few practical Lessons from the whole: And,

1st, From Christ's Readiness to go from the Centurion's Servant at *Jerusalem*, to the Widow's Son at *Nain*, we may learn not to omit any Opportunities of doing good to the Bodies or Souls of Men. We see here how forward and solicitous our Saviour was about both, making no Scruples or Delays in serving of either; but cheerfully embracing all Opportunities of contributing to their bodily Health, and promoting their eternal Welfare. He sooner wanted Objects, than Will to shew Kindness; and nothing pleas'd him better, than to find Men to have Faith enough to come to him, and to be heal'd by him. This was the Business, the Recreation, and the whole Employment of our Blessed Lord; and nothing renders us more like unto him, than a Desire and Delight in doing good in the best way and manner that we are able.

2dly, From our Saviour's compassionating and comforting the disconsolate Widow upon the Death of her dear and only Son, we may learn to commiserate and condole with each other upon the Loss of Friends and Relations, and to bear a part as well in the Sorrows as Joys of one another. We are apt and forward enough to share in the Comforts and Prosperity of others, *and to rejoice with them that rejoice*; but are commonly too shy and backward in pitying or partaking in their Troubles and Misfortunes, and *to weep with them that weep*: The one gratifies the Corruption, but the other tends more to the Perfection of our Nature; and
our

our Saviour's Example here directs us as much or more to the latter than the former, for we often read that he wept and shed Tears, but never that he laugh'd, or indulg'd himself in too much Mirth.

3dly, From the Miracle here wrought in raising the Widow's dead Child to Life again, we may learn farther to confirm our Faith in him, and to take him for the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World, for the mighty Works that were done by him, which nothing less than a Divine Power and Goodness were able to effect. Miracles are the Broad Seal of Heaven, which is never set to any Commifion but what comes from God; which made *Nicodemus*, a Ruler of the Jews, say to our Saviour, *I know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for none can do the Works that thou dost, except God were with him*; John 3. 1, 2. These Miracles abundantly testify his Mission, that his Doctrine is divine, and contains the Words of eternal Life, and that his Precepts are the best, the wisest, and the safest Rules to lead us to it: And therefore it must be not only our Duty, but our Wisdom and truest Interest to receive the one, and to obey the other.

4thly, From the Fear that fell on the People at the sight of this Miracle, we may learn to *fear the Lord and his Goodness*, as 'twas promis'd and prophesy'd of the latter Days, *Hosea 3. 5*. Let us fear to offend so great and so good a God, who is able to do such great things for our Happiness or our Destruction. Such was the Fear of these in this Gospel, a Fear of Astonishment, that set them a wondering at the Greatness of his Power; not a Fear of Desperation, to make them distrust his Goodness: for we find their Fear did not drive them from, but to him; it led them to the admiring and adoring his infinite Power, and instead of falling away, they fell to glorifying of God. From whence we may learn,

5thly, To give God the Glory of all his Mercies; not ascribing any thing to our selves, to our own Power or Merits, but acknowledging our Weakness and Worthlessness, and adoring his Power and Goodness in all the ordinary and extraordinary Acts of his Providence towards us.

6thly, From their unanimous owning this great Prophet to be risen up among them, let us learn to do likewise, and to bless God for thus visiting us with his Salvation.

Lastly, From the Rumour that went of him throughout all the Country and Regions round about, let us learn to publish

publish his Honour, and to spread the Fame of his Miracles and good Works to Mankind.

Upon the whole, let us take heed of an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the Truths of the Gospel reveal'd to us. Remember the Fate of *Corazin, Bethsaida,* and *Capernaum*, who for not believing in Christ, when they heard his Doctrine and saw his Miracles, were sentenc'd to a more heavy and intolerable Doom than *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and other barbarous Nations, where the Sound of these things never came : and better would it be for us, not to have known the ways of Righteousness, than having known them, to depart from the holy Commandment. In a word therefore, let us all say with him in the Gospel, and say it heartily, *Lord I believe, help my Unbelief.*



DISCOURSE XLIV.

The EPISTLE for the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

Ephes. iv. 1—7.

I therefore the Prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are call'd, with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love ; endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called into one Hope of your Calling, &c.

WE are taught to pray, in the Collect for this Day, that the Grace of God may always prevent and follow us, and make us to be continually given to all good Works, thro Jesus Christ our Lord. To this end,

St. Paul, then a Prisoner at *Rome* for the Cause of Christ, makes mention in the Epistle for this Day, of some of those Graces and good Works, that we are continually to

follow and be given to; beginning in the first Verse with a general Exhortation to these *Ephesians*, and in them to all Christians, *to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they were call'd*. Where by the *Vocation wherewith they were call'd*, is meant the Christian Profession, by which they were call'd out of their former Heathen State to a State of Christianity; that is, to become Christians, and to embrace the Christian Faith, reveal'd to them by the Gospel.

To *walk worthy of this Vocation*, is to lead holy Lives suitable to the Commands and Obligations it lays upon us. So St. Peter expounds it, *That as he which hath call'd us is holy, so we should be holy in all manner of Conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy: 1 Pet. i. 15, 16*. From this general Exhortation he proceeds to some of those particular Graces, which we pray may always prevent and follow us, to wit, that our good Works may be done,

1st, *With all Lowliness*; that is, with a humble and lowly Opinion of our selves, free from all Pride, Vanity, and Loftiness of Spirit.

2^{dly}, *With all Meekness*; that is, with all Mildness and Gentleness of Behaviour towards others, free from all Passion, Prejudice, or Partiality.

3^{dly}, *With Long-suffering*; that is, with a patient bearing of lesser Wrongs and Injuries, free from sudden Rage or Thoughts of Revenge.

4^{thly}, *With forbearing one another in Love*; that is, bearing with the Infirmities, and hiding the Indiscretions of each other, free from all Censuring, Detraction, and Backbiting. These are some of the principal Graces and Vertues, that answer and adorn our Christian Profession; and they that live in the practice of them, may be truly said *to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they are call'd*.

But the chiefest Vertue here prescrib'd and insisted on for that purpose, is the living together in *Unity and Peace*, as becometh good Christians and good Subjects. To this we are directed in the next words, *Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*. The Unity of the Spirit is that to which we are call'd, and by which we are united by the Holy Spirit. 'Tis often express'd and illustrated in Scripture by the Union that is between the Body and the Soul; that as all the Members of the natural Body are join'd together and united by one Soul, so all the Members of Christ's mystical Body the Church are united and animated

mated by one Spirit, call'd therefore the Unity of the Spirit. And this is to be *kept in the Bond of Peace*; that is, by one Fellowship, Discipline, and Communion, which serves to join all the Parts and Members of Christ's Body, as a Bond is wont to tye and fasten things together. So that the Sense of the Exhortation is, that all Christians should labour to live peaceably together in the Unity of the Church, without Dissension and Separation, and to preserve the Bond of Charity and Christian Communion, with which the Holy Spirit hath join'd all Christians together. This is here and in sundry other places of Scripture strictly charg'd and press'd upon us, as a good means to *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are call'd*: for Unity and Peace will recommend our Profession to its greatest Enemies, whereas Discord and Dissension mightily expose and disparage it; and therefore the former are to be kept intire and inviolate, and the latter to be shun'd and avoided by all good Christians.

For this reason, our Saviour's last Prayer in the behalf of his Disciples, was, *That they all might be one, as he and his Father were one, that the World might believe that God had sent him*: which they will sooner do, by seeing his Followers live in Love and Unity together, than by observing them to clash and separate from one another. And therefore St. Paul earnestly press'd the *Philippians*, to *stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind striving together for the Faith of the Gospel*; Phil. i. 27. And here he gives the same Charge to the *Ephesians*, to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*.

But the better to enforce this Unity upon them and us, the Apostle here adds many weighty Arguments to engage us to the Love and Practice of it; and these take up the remaining part of this Day's Epistle. As,

1st, He tells us in the next Verse, that *there is but one Body*: meaning, that there is but one Christian Catholick Church, which is in Scripture frequently call'd *the Body of Christ*; For as we have many Members in one Body (saith the Apostle) and all the Members have not the same Office, so we being many are one Body in Christ; Rom. 12. 4, 5. Tho there be many Congregations meeting in several places for the Convenience of Worship and Discipline, yet the Church of Christ is but one all the World over. It was at first confin'd to *Judea*, the Jews having a Partition-Wall to separate and distinguish them from all other Nations,

who were excluded from the Privileges of the Temple; but 'tis since enlarg'd to all the World, the Gospel being order'd to be preach'd to all Nations, who may now see the Salvation of God.

Now this Addition hath made the Body bigger, but not multiply'd it into more; for 'tis still one and the same Body, tho grown and extended into larger Dimensions: as a Person is the same when arriv'd to the Stature of a Man, as he was under the lesser Dimensions of Childhood or Youth. So that the Members of the Church being join'd by the same Worship, Discipline, and Communion, which are as it were the Nerves and Sinews to hold them together, make up but one mystical Body of Christ, as the several Parts and Members join'd together make up but one natural Body.

Neither do the distant Places of meeting break the Unity of the Church, whilst they all join in one Communion, no more than the different Situation and Offices of the several Members do destroy the Unity of the natural Body. Indeed, all the Members of Christ's Church should, if it might be, meet in one place, that with one Mind and one Mouth they might all glorify God together: but that being impossible, by reason of the distance of Habitations and Countries, care is to be taken, that they join in what they may, *viz.* in the Doctrine, Discipline, and Communion of the Church; and that will unite them into one mystical Body, and make them what the Apostle here and elsewhere affirms, to be *all one in Christ Jesus*.

2ly, 'Tis farther said, that as there is but one Body, so there is one Spirit to animate and enliven it. Tho the evil Spirits are many, and wicked Men are haunted by Legions of them, yet the good Spirit of God, by which good Men are acted, is but one. This is to the Church as the Soul is to the Body, the Life, Vigour, and Activity of it: and as one Body can have but one Soul to quicken it, so the mystical Body of Christ hath but one Spirit to animate and actuate it. This is the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, which we are bid to keep to and preserve, by loving and living peaceably in one Fellowship and Communion with one another; that as one Soul actuates all the Members of the Body, and thereby keeps a Harmony and Sympathy with every Part, so this one Spirit influences all the Members of the Church to preserve the Bond of mutual Love and Peace with each other: which is a good Argument

ment to persuade Christians to unite in their Desires and Devotion. To which end we are here minded,

3ly, That *we are all call'd into one Hope of our Calling*; meaning, that tho there are different Callings as to the Affairs of this World, sutable to the different Wants and Necessities of human Life, yet the Calling or Profession of Christianity is but one, suted to the Nature and Necessities of the Soul. And tho Men may have different Desires and Designs in relation to this Life, yet they are all call'd into one Hope of their Christian Calling, to wit, a future and eternal Life. And this is another good Motive to preserve Unity, and prevent Divisions; for all Christians having the same Work to do, and expecting the same Wages when done, having all the same spiritual Wants here, and hoping for the same Reward hereafter, 'tis absurd to differ and fall out in the way to it, and highly reasonable that we should join hand in hand together for the mutual Aid and Assistance of one another: especially considering, that there is nothing but perfect Unity and Harmony in Heaven, to which we are all making; there is no Discord or Dissension there; and if ever we hope to arrive thither, we must be fitted for it by Peace and Love with each other. For the Happiness of that Place consists much in these things, and if we are not dispos'd to them here, we are not qualify'd to be receiv'd into them hereafter; and therefore we must lay aside all Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, and the like, which are the Dispositions of Hell; and follow Peace, Love, Amity, Humility, and Concord, which are the Qualifications that can alone prepare us for Heaven.

4ly, To persuade to this Unity, the Apostle farther tells us, *that there is but one God*; meaning, that there is but one supreme Head and Governour of the Christian Church, even Christ, the sole Author and Founder of it. He hath not subjected it to many Masters to lord it over God's Heritage, nor made his Church a Monster of many Heads, to expose it to Disorder and Divisions; but to us there is but one Lord, who hath subjected it to himself, and united it into a spiritual Society under subordinate Rulers and Teachers of his own appointing: for *he gave first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, then Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints for the Work of the Ministry, and edifying the Body of Christ*. After which he commission'd the Apostles to send others, as he had sent them, to teach and go-

vern his Church, willing them to watch over their particular Flocks, of *which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers*; and likewise laying a Charge on all Christians, to *obey them that had the Rule over them in the Lord, because they watch for their Souls*. So that the Apostle's affirming there is but one Lord, signifies, that as the Church is one, so there is but one Discipline or Government erected in it under Christ the Head, and the Bishops and Pastors as his subordinate Officers. And to live in Obedience to them, is to preserve the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*; but to cast off or depart from this Discipline, is to create Schisms in the Church, and to raise Rebellion against the Authority of Christ. In short, the Argument taken from one Lord is very strong for the Union and good Agreement of all that are subjected to him, to live by his Laws as so many menial Servants in one Family, and not to fall out about any Rule or Government among themselves.

5ly, To keep this Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, the Apostle farther adds, that there is but *one Faith*; meaning, that all the great and necessary Points of Religion are summ'd up for us in one Creed, which we all profess to *believe*, and are requir'd to *hold fast*: And this Unity of Faith is a sufficient Foundation for a Unity of Heart and Mind; for since we agree in the main, why should we differ about small matters? and whilst we hold the Head, which is Christ, and the Foundation, which is the Christian Faith, no needless Questions or nice Disputes should break the Peace and Unity of the Church. To preserve which, he tells us,

6ly, That there is but *one Baptism*; that is, there is but one Door of Entrance into the Christian Church, by which we are all admitted to the Benefits and Privileges of it; and 'tis by this Door too that we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: for our Saviour hath told us more than once, that *except a Man be born again of Water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; John 3. 3, 5. And as there is but one Baptism to receive us all into the Church, so there is but one Communion to confirm us in it, and to convey to us the Mercies and Benefits of it: for *we being many (saith the Apostle) are one Bread, and are all Partakers of that one Bread*; 1 Cor. 10. 17. And elsewhere the same Apostle puts both these together, saying, *By one Spirit are we all baptiz'd into one Body, and are all made to drink into one Spirit*; 1 Cor. 12. 13. Seeing then

then we all enter into the Church by the same Gate, and walk to Heaven the same way, let us not scatter or divide, but keep together for the mutual Aid and Comfort of each other; and being join'd together by the Holy Sacraments, the Seals of the Holy Spirit, let us endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. To which end,

Lastly, We are here told, that *there is but one God and Father of all, who is above all, by his Power, and thro all, by his Providence, and in all, by his Presence*: and having but one Object of Divine Worship, *viz. the Omnipotent Maker and Master of us all*, we are to unite and agree in his Service, and adore him with one Heart and one Consent. This is the highest Motive and Example of Unity, taken from the Unity of the Godhead, which our Saviour's Prayer sets as a Pattern of Union among Believers, *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, so they also may be one in us*; John 17. 20, 21. The Heathens indeed had *Lords many and Gods many*, and it could be no wonder if they were divided in serving of them; but *to us there is but one Lord and one God*, to whom therefore we should all pay our joint and unanimous Devotions.

Thus I have briefly consider'd the Portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle for this Day, which contains many weighty and cogent Arguments for Unity of Heart and Mind among Christians: yea, it shews all our Religion to be founded upon Unity, and is only promoted by it; for we are all united in one *mystical Body* of Christ's Church. And this Body is acted and animated by *one Holy Spirit*; there is one Door of Entrance into it, *i. e. by one Baptism*; there is but *one Faith* profess'd in it; and in a word, there is but one Object of all Divine Worship, *viz. the one God and Father of all, who is above all, and thro all, and in us all*. From all which we learn,

I. The Nature and Sinfulness of Schism, which is the dividing of the Body of Christ, and making it not one Body, but many. *Is Christ divided?* saith the Apostle to the *Corinthians*, upon their breaking into Schisms and Factions; implying, that these things not only divide Christians, but Christ himself, by tearing in pieces his Body the Church: and therefore the same Apostle advises, that *there be no Schism in the Body, nor any Divisions among Christians*; 1 Cor. 1. 10. *We being many* (saith he) *are one Bread and one Body, and are all Partakers of one Bread*: signifying,

that by breaking Communion, and setting up Altar against Altar, we break the Unity of Christ's Church, and make a Schism in his Body; for thereby one Member is rent and torn from another: and as a Member cut off is no longer a Part of the Body from which 'tis sever'd, so they who cut themselves off from the Communion of the Church by a wilful and causeless Separation, are no longer Members of Christ's Body.

Indeed there may and must be a local Separation, because all the Members of the Catholick Church being dispers'd into several parts of the World, cannot meet together in one Place, and in a National Church. The Members, by reason of their distance from one another, require distinct Places or Parishes for their meeting or assembling together: but there must be no Separation in point of Worship, no opposite Communion or Discipline, no Conventicles or House-Worship in opposition to the establish'd Worship of the Temple or House of God; for these are plain Divisions, and unwarrantable Separations from the Church of Christ. For as the severing or dividing one Limb from another makes a Schism in the natural Body, by destroying the Union, and cutting off the Communication of the several Parts; even so the dividing of the Members of the Church by different Communions from one another, makes a Schism in the mystical Body of Christ: in which case the divided Parts are cut off from the Head, and hinder'd from receiving Grace or spiritual Strength from him. Which shews the Danger as well as the Sin of Schism, a Lesson to be learnt from the Unity of the Body.

2. From the Unity of the Spirit and the Fruits of it, we may learn what Spirit we are of, and how far we are acted by it; for the Spirit of God is a Spirit of Love, Peace, Lowliness, Meekness, Patience, and the like: these tend to promote Unity of Heart and Mind among Men, and dispose them to agree and join together in the Worship of God. But the evil Spirit lusteth to Envy, Strife, Variance and Contention; and these kindle a bitter Zeal and Emulation among Christians, which lead them into Division and Separation. Try your selves then by this Touchstone, and you may see whether the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If you are meek, humble, and modest, willing to learn of your Teachers, to obey your Superiors, to unite and agree with your Neighbours; you are then acted by the good Spirit of God, which is known by these Fruits: but if you
are

are proud, arrogant and untractable, unwilling to submit or be taught by your Betters; if you are censorious, false, and unjust to one another, be not deceiv'd, you are not mov'd to these things by the Holy Spirit of God, but by the evil Spirit that rules in the Hearts of the Children of Disobedience. In short, the good Spirit is but one, tho the evil Spirits are many; the former guides into the Ways of Truth and Peace, the latter into the Paths of Error and Diffension.

3. From the Unity of Faith, and the one Hope of our Christian Calling, we may learn to unite and go hand in hand together in it, without differing or falling out about inferiour matters: for whilst we adhere and hold to the same Faith, and expect the same End of it, even the Salvation of our Souls, no lesser things can justify a Contention, or much less warrant a Separation. We are bid to contend earnestly for the Faith, and to continue stedfast in the Profession of it; but for the lesser Matters of Order and Decency, we are bid to submit, and shew all lawful Compliance, which is absolutely necessary to preserve Unity.

4. From the one Lord, or the Unity of the Head, we may easily learn this Compliance; for the Head is the Seat of Wisdom and Power, to direct and command the other Members: and this may in the most eminent manner be affirm'd of this mystical Head, in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledg, and who hath the sole Right to guide and govern his whole Body. Beside, as the Head conveys down animal Spirits, Heat, and Vigour to the other Members, by which they live, move, and have their being; so Christ, the mystical Head of the Church, sends down the kindly Influences of his Grace and Holy Spirit upon his Members, to quicken and excite all their Operations: which may teach us to live, to unite, and to abide in his Body; for as the Branches cannot live or bring forth any Fruit, except they abide in the Vine, so neither can we, except we are united to and abide in him.

5. From the Unity of the Sacraments, let us learn to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace; for these are as the Ligaments and Arteries to hold all the Parts together. 'Tis by one Baptism that we are all initiated into Christ's Church, and by one Communion that we are all confirm'd and continu'd in it: so vain and foolish are they who think they belong to Christ without the initiating Ordinance of Baptism, and so profane and presumptuous are
all

378 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

all such as expect any Benefit from him, without the confirming Ordinance of the holy Communion. These are the Seals of the new Covenant, without which we can lay no claim to the Title or Privileges of Christians.

Lastly, From the one God and Father of all, let us be persuaded with one Mind and one Mouth to glorify our great Creator; so shall we, by preserving Peace and Unity on Earth, arrive at last to the Unity of the Church in Heaven, and *come to the measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ*: to which, God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the Merits of his Son, and our ever-blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XLV.

The GOSPEL for the Seventeenth Sunday after *Trinity.*

St. Luke xiv. I ——— II.

It came to pass as Jesus went into the House of one of the chief Pharisees, to eat Bread on the Sabbath-day, that they watch'd him. And behold there was a certain Man before him that had the Dropsy, &c.

IN this Gospel for the Day, there are four observable things to be consider'd and spoken to: And they are,

First, Our Saviour's Freedom of Conversation, He went into the House of one of the chief Pharisees to eat Bread: together with the Circumstance of Time, when it was; 'twas on the Sabbath Day.

Secondly, The insidious Falshood and Treachery of the Pharisees in entertaining him; instead of welcoming, they only watched him, to find some Occasion to traduce and accuse him.

Thirdly, Our Saviour's great Wisdom in putting them to silence,

silence, and thereby preventing and frustrating their wicked Purpose.

Fourthly, Our Saviour's checking their Pride and Vanity, in affecting Precedence and Preheminance above others. These things contain the Substance of this Gospel, and must therefore be the Subject of the following Discourse.

And, *First*, Of the Freedom of his Conversation, *He went into the House of one of the Pharisees to eat Bread.* Whether he went in upon an Invitation, or only made an accidental or occasional Visit, is not here express'd, nor is it much material to enquire: we find him, as Opportunity offer'd, ready enough to do both. When *St. Matthew a Publican* invited him to a Feast, he freely went, and entertain'd the Company with Discourse that far exceeded all the other Entertainment. In his passing through *Jericho* he saw *Zacheus*, another *Publican*, climbing a *Sicamore Tree*, with a Desire to see him: Jesus looking up and seeing him, said unto him, *Zacheus make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy House*; who immediately hasten'd and came down, and receiv'd him joyfully; and well he might, for he brought Salvation with him; *Luke 19. 5, 6, 9.*

The *Pharisees* indeed blam'd this Freedom, saying to his Disciples, *Why eateth and drinketh thy Master with Publicans and Sinners?* They thought it unbecoming so Divine and Holy a Person as Jesus appear'd to be, to converse so familiarly with the worst of Men; for so they took the *Publicans* to be. But Christ knowing their Hearts, reply'd to them, *The whole have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick*: meaning, that they who were sound and holy in their own opinion, had not so much need of his Company, as they that found themselves sick, and labour'd under their Infirmities: for he came not to call the *Righteous*, that is, such as were so in their own eyes, but *Sinners to Repentance*; that is, such as were sensible of their Sins, and felt the Burden of their Iniquities. This was the Design of his coming and conversing in the World, to take Men off from the Love and Practice of Sin, and to reduce them to a better State and Course of Life. And this is more easily done upon modest and humble Sinners, than upon those that are proudly conceited of their own Righteousness. And therefore the *Pharisees* might as well blame the Physician of the Body, for visiting Hospitals and sick Patients, as the great Physician of the Soul, for visiting such

as labour'd under worse Distempers. However, our Saviour did not wholly decline the civil Society of these proud Precifians, for we read here that he went into the House of one of the chief *Pharisees* to eat Bread; he join'd with them in the common Actions of human Life, tho he had little hopes of bringing them to a better: for they were his greatest Enemies, and oppos'd all his Designs of Good, both to themselves and others. They kept a Distance from others, as Men of the Earth, and not worthy of the Conversation of such heavenly Persons as they: now our Saviour sought both by his Discourse and Example to cure this supercilious and disdainful Carriage, and to render them more affable, courteous and condescending to other Men. There was nothing sour, morose or crabbed in him; but he was marvelously free and conversable with all Mankind, and would have them be so too.

But this incorrigible Sect, instead of mending their own Faults, endeavour'd to find all the Faults they could in him. To that end, our Saviour coming on the Sabbath-day to the House of this chief *Pharisee*, one of the best Quality, and a Ruler among them; 'tis said, *They watch'd him*, and sought to take all Advantages against him. And this will lead me to the

Second Thing propounded, viz. the insidious and treacherous Carriage of these *Pharisees* towards him; who contrary to all the Laws of Hospitality, instead of welcoming, watched all Opportunities against him.

This was generally the Practice and Behaviour of the Lawyers and *Pharisees* towards him; for sometimes they came to him on purpose to tempt and entangle him in his Talk, as we read, *Luke 10. 25*. At other times they came to him with glozing and flattering Speeches, as in the Case of Tribute-mony, saying, *Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the Way of God in Truth, neither regardest the Person of any Man; tell us therefore what thinkest thou, Is it lawful to give Tribute unto Cesar or not?* Which Question proceeded not from any sincere Desire of being inform'd in the Truth of the Matter, but merely to expose him to the Rage either of the Jews or the Romans; which made him, knowing their Wickedness, say, *Why tempt ye me, ye Hypocrites?* *Mat. 22. 16, 17, &c.* And here this chief *Pharisee*, and those about him, watch'd all our Saviour's Words and Actions, only to find something where-

wherewith to charge and accuse him. Indeed, some Mens Talk and Conversation are no better than Gins and Traps, design'd not so much to please or inform, as to ensnare and entangle those they converse with. And such was that of the Pharisee in the Text, who upon Christ's coming to him on the Sabbath-day, hop'd to find him saying or doing something in Derogation of the Honour of that Day, which they held in great Estimation: Accordingly an Object being then presented before him, of a certain Man who had the Dropsy, they concluded that that might administer some Matter of Accusation against him, which our Saviour wisely foresaw and prevented. And that will lead us to the next thing here to be consider'd, viz.

Thirdly, Christ's great Wisdom in putting them to silence, and thereby defeating their wicked Designs. The Advantage they thought to take against him, was about his curing this sick Man on the Sabbath-day: for the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, were strict and superstitious Observers of that Day, in which they would do no manner of Work, no not the common Offices of Humanity and Charity; yea, they abstain'd from the ordinary and necessary Actions of human Life: for they would scarce eat or drink, or defend themselves, if set upon on that day, which made them twice a Prey to their Enemies; once to *Antiochus*, and another time to *Pompey*. They blam'd the Disciples for plucking a few Ears of Corn on the Sabbath-day, tho warranted by Necessity, and the Exigence of a great Hunger, as we read, *Mat. 12*. They accus'd our Saviour for curing one that had a wither'd Hand on that Day, and sought to destroy him, as we read in the same Chapter. *St. Luke* tells us, that the Ruler of the Synagogue was mov'd with great Indignation against him for healing a Woman on that Day, who labour'd under a Spirit of Infirmy eighteen Years; saying to the People, *There are six Days in which Men ought to work, on them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day*; *Luke 13. 11, &c.*

And here the chief Pharisee in the Text watched whether he would heal this sick Man of his Dropsy on that day, that they might have wherewith to accuse him. But Christ knew their Hearts, and was able to frustrate their Design, and therefore he began with them, putting the Question to him, *Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?* *St. Mark* puts the Question farther, *Is it lawful to do Good on the Sabbath-day*

day, or to do Evil; to save Life, or to kill? Mark 3. 4. that is, Is it not much better to do Good, and to save Life by healing, than to do Evil, and to kill, by neglecting it on that day? To which they answer'd nothing, but held their peace; and finding that they had nothing to say against it, He took him, and healed him, and let him go.

But for their farther Satisfaction, he mov'd another Question to them, saying, *Which of you shall have an Ass, or an Ox fallen into a Pit, and will not straitway pull him out on the Sabbath-day? St. Matthew puts the Case even in the smallest Matters, saying, What Man is there among you, that shall have one Sheep, and if it fall into a Pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold of it, and lift it out? How much then is a Man better than a Sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-day; Mat. 12. To which St. Luke here adds, And they could not answer him again to these things.*

Thus did our Saviour put these Lawyers and Pharisees to shame and silence, as he did him who merely to tempt him, ask'd which was the great Commandment in the Law; and those, that to entangle him would know whether it were lawful to pay Tribute to *Cesar*: to all which he gave such Answers as struck them dumb, and made them ask no more Questions. For, as St. Luke tells us, *All his Adversaries were ashamed, and all the People rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. Luke 13. 17.*

Moreover, our Saviour being at a Feast in this chief Pharisee's House, and observing how desirous the Lawyers and Pharisees were to take place, and to have the Precedence at the Feast, he put forth a Parable to them: which brings me to the last thing propounded, *viz.*

Fourthly, Our Saviour's checking their Pride and Vanity, in affecting Precedence and Preheminence above others. This Vanity he chastiseth here by a Parable, which he put forth to them that were bidden, when he mark'd how they chose out the chief Rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any Man to a Wedding, sit not down in the highest Room, lest a more honourable Man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this Man place, and thou begin with Shame to take the lowest Room: But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest Room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have Worship

ship with them that sit at Meat with thee. In which Parable he reprehends the Ambition and Folly of such as strive for Preheminence, and seek to exalt themselves above their Brethren; shewing it to be much more decent and honourable for a Man to set himself below, than above his Place; that Humility was the best Step to Honour, and that Pride leads only to Debasement. Christ had observ'd before of the Scribes and Pharisees, that they loved the uppermost Rooms at Feasts, and the chief Seats in the Synagogues; that they affected Greetings in the Markets, and to be called of Men, Rabbi, Rabbi: Mat. 23. 6, 7. which made him upon all occasions seek to humble their Pride, and to check their Vanity. And we may observe some in our days, much like the Pharisees in this respect, affecting to be somebody this way, and too much courting Preheminence; endeavouring to depress others to advance themselves, and to raise their own Reputation upon the Ruin of their Betters. Yea, we find something of this among Christ's own Disciples; for we read, that *there was a Strife among them, which of them should be the greatest*: To put a stop to this vain Contention, our Saviour tells them, that though such Contests may be found among the Kings and great Men of the Earth, yet it shall not be so among you; *but let him that is greatest among you, be as the Younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve*: urging upon them his own Example; *For whether is greater (saith he) he that sitteth at Meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at Meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.* Luke 22. 24, 25, &c. And if he was so far from courting Greatness, that he chose and prefer'd Meanness before it, can it become us to strive who shall be greatest? When he took upon him the Form of a Servant, and did the meanest Offices of such, shall we take upon us, and covet to be call'd Masters? This is not to learn of our Saviour, to be meek and lowly in Heart, but to learn of Lucifer, to be proud and lofty in Spirit.

In short, this Haughtiness of Spirit is here sharply reprehended, and the contrary Vertue of Humility as highly recommended to us in this Parable; both which are back'd with two strong Arguments in the Close: *For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*; that is, he that affecteth the higher Rooms shall be brought low, and he that taketh the lower Seats shall be advanc'd higher. An assuming Boldness and Arrogance in Talk or Behaviour is commonly odious and
fulsome

fullsom in the sight of all Men; and none rise higher in the Opinion of God and Man, than they who are lowest in their own.

This is briefly the Sum of the Gospel for this Day; which may serve to instruct us in the following Lessons. As,

1st, From our Saviour's Freedom of Conversation we may learn to be affable, courteous and condescending to all Men: This Christ's Command and Example plainly teach us; *Learn of me* (saith he) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* 'Tis no part of his Religion to be sour, morose or cynical; for he convers'd familiarly with all sorts of Men, and hath will'd his Disciples to do so too. The *Pharisees* indeed were supercilious and austere, keeping a distance from others as unworthy of their Company, and saying, *Stand off, come not nigh me, for I am holier than thou;* and their modern Followers have something of the same Moroseness, separating from others as Sinners, and fearing to be defil'd by their unholy Conversation: But our Saviour's Practice and Advice was quite otherwise; for he freely ate and drank with Publicans and Sinners, and hath will'd us to be courteous and kindly affectioned to all Men. We are indeed to shun the Vices, but not the Persons of bad Men; we are to avoid the Contagion of their Example, but not to deny them the Civility of our Society. *Nabal*, for his Churlishness, was stil'd one of the Sons of Belial: and to stand at a morose distance from other Men, is rather the Guise of a proud *Pharisee*, than the Practice of a good Christian.

2^{dly}, From the *Pharisee's* watching our Saviour to ensnare and entrap him, we learn the evil Effects of Malice and Hypocrisy, what a pernicious Influence they have upon Conversation, and how they poison and embitter all Society. We read of some that watch for our Halting, and seek occasion against us; yea, lay Traps in our way on purpose to catch or make us fall. Our Saviour found this Dealing from the World, and the Disciple is not above his Lord: *Marvel not* (saith he) *if the World hate you, for they hated me before they hated you.* Malice studies to undermine and to do harm, and will not suffer Men to sleep till they have done mischief: Hypocrisy seeks to cover such malicious Designs with flattering Speeches, and to put fair Colours upon the foulest Actions. The World abounds with such treacherous and dangerous Enemies; which may teach us to be as watchful to avoid, as they are to do mischief.

3^{dly},

3dly, From Christ's defeating the malicious Designs of the *Pharisee*, in watching of him, we may learn to walk warily and circumspectly, not as Fools, but as wise, and to arm our selves against the Wiles of the Wicked. When Christ sent his Disciples abroad into the World, he told them, *Behold I send you forth as Sheep among Wolves*; that is, among wicked and ungodly Men, who will be apt to worry and lie in wait for you, as the ravening Wolves do for the innocent Sheep: therefore (saith he) *be ye wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves*. A Serpent, you know, hath many Ways to secure and defend himself from Danger; it hath many Windings and Turnings to that purpose, and can incircle it self into a narrow Compass, the better to avoid being hit or receiving Harm. Which things may teach us to use all good Means to escape the Treachery and Malice of designing Men: but yet to the Wisdom of the Serpent we are to add the Harmlessness of the Dove; *i. e.* to use nothing but good and lawful Means to that end, and not betake our selves to sinister and indirect Courses to promote our Safety. The Dove, you know, is an innocent Creature, void of Gall, that often takes, but never does any harm; which we should therefore imitate in the Innocence of our Ways and Behaviour. Our Saviour silenc'd and secur'd himself from those that watch'd him, and sought by tempting to bring him into Danger: In like manner we should cut off all occasion from them, that seek occasion against us, that they who watch for our halting may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say against us.

Lastly, From our Saviour's checking the *Pharisees* for their affecting Precedence and Preheminence, we may learn to cast off all Pride, and to be cloth'd with Humility: for God and Man resist the Proud, and pull down such as are lifted up; but both conspire to give Grace and Favour to the Humble. He putteth down the Mighty from their Seats (saith the Blessed Virgin) that is, from those upper Rooms, and higher Seats, to which their Pride had mounted them; and exalteth the Humble and Meek, that is, such as they seek to depress and despise. Wherefore let us strive not so much to be Great as Good, and labour more for Lowliness than Haughtiness of Mind; and by thus humbling our selves, God shall exalt us in due time: Which God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c. Amen.



DISCOURSE XLVI.

The EPISTLE for the Eighteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

1 Cor. i. 4—8.

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the Grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, &c.

THE Collect for this Day teaches us to beseech God for Grace to withstand the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; and with pure Hearts and Minds to follow him, the only true God.

Suitable hereunto, the Epistle for this Day contains St. Paul's Thanksgiving unto God, for giving this Grace unto the *Corinthians*, together with the many blessed Fruits and Effects that proceeded from it: *I thank my God always on your behalf, &c.* Where we may observe,

First, The great Duty of Thankfulness; *I thank my God.*

Secondly, The Time when this Duty is to be perform'd; and that is *always*.

Thirdly, The Persons for whom this is here done; and that is, for the *Corinthians*: *I thank my God always on your behalf.*

Fourthly, The subject Matter of his Thanksgiving; and that is, *for the Grace of God given unto them by Jesus Christ.* And,

Lastly, The blessed Fruits and Effects of this Divine Grace, in the following part of this Epistle. Of each of these particularly. And,

First, I must begin this Discourse, as St. Paul here does this Epistle, with the great Duty of Thankfulness; *I thank my God.* There being no better way to derive the Blessings of Heaven upon us, than by the Channel of a thankful Heart; and nothing more stops the Current of future Favours, than Unthankfulness for former. Now Thankfulness
in

in general consists in a due Sense and Valuation of Benefits, join'd with humble Acknowledgments of them, and hearty Desires and Endeavours of Requitall. This is the Nature of this Vertue: Where I stile it,

(1.) A due Sense and Valuation of Benefits. 'Tis great Ingratitude not to be sensible of Favours, nor to remember or regard them as we ought: and therefore we find the Psalmist often blaming the *Israelites*, for not keeping God's Mercies in remembrance; *They regarded not the Works of the Lord* (saith he) *neither consider'd they the Operation of his Hand*, Psal. 28. 5. *Yea, Of the Rock that begat them they were unmindful, and forgot the God that form'd them*; Deut. 32. 18. This made him often to call upon his Soul, saying, *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits*; Psal. 103. 1, 2. He resolv'd to rub up his Memory, saying, *I will remember thy Wonders of old, and will meditate on all thy Works*; *for thou hast been gracious unto me, and thy Mercy is over all thy Works*. Psal. 143. 5.

And as Gratitude requires the remembering and recollecting of Benefits, so does it the high esteeming and valuing of them too: For we measure our Thankfulness not so much by the Worth of the things, as by the Esteem we have of them. He that undervalues a Benefit, his Gratitude will be but small, if any; but he that sets a high Price and Value upon it, his Heart will be fill'd with Thankfulness: and therefore we find *David* often extolling and magnifying the Works of the Lord; *The Mercies of the Lord are great* (saith he) *sought out of all that have pleasure therein*; Psal. 111. 2. And elsewhere, *His Mercy is great unto the Heavens, and his Faithfulness reacheth unto the Clouds*. And indeed he that considers the undeserved Freeness of God's Bounty, and his own Unworthiness of the least of his Mercies, will be still magnifying of God's Goodness, and raise his Thankfulness accordingly.

(2.) I stile it a due Sense and Valuation of Benefits, join'd with *humble and frequent Acknowledgments of them*. 'Tis a known piece of Gratitude, to own and publish what we have receiv'd; and indeed where the Heart is truly sensible of a Kindness, there the Tongue will not be silent. Thus we find *David*, that great Example of Thanksgiving, often acknowledging the Loving-kindness of the Lord; saying, *I will sing of the Mercies of the Lord for ever, with my Mouth will I make known his Faithfulness to all Generations*; Psal. 89. 1. *I will publish with the Voice of Thanksgiving, and*

Speak of all thy wondrous Works; Psal. 26. 7. I have not hid thy Righteousness within my Heart, my Talk hath been of thy Salvation; Psal. 40. 10. These Calves of the Lips are more acceptable unto God, than all the Calves in the Stall; neither doth he call so much for the Fruit of our Land, as the Fruit of our Lips, in these Acknowledgments.

(3.) To such humble Acknowledgments we are to add hearty Desires and Endeavours of Requitall; which is the just Tribute we owe to our great Benefactor. Hence we find *David* the devout Thanksgiver frequently asking, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits?* He knew something was to be render'd to him, but knew not what was able to make any Compensation to the Donor, or answer the many and great Obligations of the Receiver. And indeed we can make no Returns suitable to the Number and Greatness of God's Mercies; for *our Righteousness extendeth not unto him*, neither is he the better for all our Sacrifices. And therefore the Psalmist adds, *I will take the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord: I will pay my Vows unto him, and praise him with joyful Lips.* This he hath promis'd to accept as the best Requitall we can make, which therefore we should not fail to return to him. This is the Vertue of Thankfulness, here taught us in these words, *I thank my God.*

But, *Secondly*, when is this Duty to be perform'd? Why that, our Apostle tells us, must be *always; I thank my God always.* Which cannot be understood of a continual unintermitted Course of Thanksgiving; for then we must do nothing else, which would be both unreasonable and unpracticable: but of such a Perseverance in the Duty, as is agreeable with the Nature of the thing, and the Possibility of doing it. And so the Phrase implies,

1st, The frequent Performance of the Duty. What is seldom or never done, is in Scripture-Dialect said not to be done at all; and what is often done and repeated, is said to be done always: of both which, many Examples might be given. *Every day* (saith *David*, that eminent Example in this kind) *will I bless the Lord, and sing Praises unto him for ever and ever.* As God renews his Mercies upon us every day, so are we every day to renew our Thanksgivings; and what is done thus daily, is said to be done always.

2^{dly}, The thanking of God *always*, may imply the appointing and observing some certain Seasons and Opportunities

nities for the performing of this Duty; the constant observing whereof, tho it includes not every Minute of Time, may and usually is term'd the doing it always.

But this Phrase here chiefly implies a constant Readiness and Preparation for this Duty: he that is habitually dispos'd to give Thanks, and willingly embraces all fit Opportunities of expressing it, is in the Scripture-Sense said to do it always. So we are bid to *pray continually*, and to *pray without ceasing*; which does not require us to be always upon our knees, offering up our Prayers, but to be still in a Readiness and Disposition for it upon every fit Occasion. The good Man is said to be ever *merciful, and lendeth*; not that he is always actually dispensing of Alms, but that his Mind is ever inclin'd to do it as occasion offereth. In like manner, a grateful Person is said to *give thanks always*, because he is always dispos'd to do it upon all fit Opportunities.

But, *Thirdly*, who are the Persons, for whom we are thus to thank God always? Why, the Apostle's doing this here in the behalf of the *Corinthians*, shews that we are to do it for others as well as our selves. Yea, the same Apostle exhorts, that *Prayers and giving of Thanks be made for all Men*, 1 Tim. 3. 1, 2. We are not to confine this Office to our selves, and only to bless God for the Mercies we receive in our own Person; but we are to enlarge it to others, and thank him for the Blessings bestow'd on them likewise. So the Apostle did for these *Corinthians*, and we find him doing the same in the behalf of the *Philippians*: and likewise requiring us, as we have opportunity, to do the like for all Men; Gal. 4. 10.

But, *Fourthly*, for what did the Apostle here thank God in the behalf of the *Corinthians*? Why that the next words declare; 'twas *for the Grace of God, which was given to them by Jesus Christ*. Where by the Grace of God we are to understand the Gospel of Grace, or the Revelation of those sublime and saving Truths contain'd in it; in which sense it frequently occurs in Holy Scripture. So in the Epistle to *Titus*, *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation*, is said to *appear unto all Men*, Tit. 2. 11. that is, the Gospel of Grace which bringeth the glad Tidings of Salvation, hath been made manifest both to Jew and Gentile, and Men of all Nations may now see and partake of the Salvation of God. And so Grace here signifies the great Mercy of the Gospel preach'd

preach'd unto them; which is a Mercy worthy of the greatest Thanksgivings, for by it they were brought out of the Darkness of Paganism, and led into the marvellous Light of Christianity: and they who before sat in the Regions of the Shadow of Death, were by this means translated into the Land of everlasting Life; for which reason, Life and Immortality are said to be brought to light by the Gospel. And this *Grace* is here said to be *given to them by Jesus Christ*: for he first preach'd this Gospel unto them, and enlighten'd their Minds with the Knowledg of these divine and heavenly Truths; upon which account he is stiled, *The true Light that lighteneth every one that cometh into the World*. He who lay in the Bosom of the Father, was alone able, and accordingly hath reveal'd the whole Mind and Will of God to us; shewing in the Gospel the Way to Happiness, and discovering to all Mankind the Means of their Salvation. Christ was the first Purchaser, and likewise the first Revealer of the Kingdom of Heaven, and 'tis he alone that hath discover'd the Way that leads to it; so that the Light of the Gospel is intirely his Gift, and is indeed such an invaluable Blessing, as well deserves the loudest Praises and Thanksgivings. And therefore well might the Apostle here thank God for this Grace and Favour bestow'd on these *Corinthians*; especially considering the many and great Benefits they receiv'd thereby, of which he gives some account in the following Verses. As,

(1.) *That in every thing they were enrich'd by him*: meaning, that in all things pertaining unto Christ they were plentifully furnish'd, and wanted no means to attain unto them. He particularly instances first in their being *enrich'd in all Utterance*, which refers to that miraculous Gift of Tongues, which was granted to some of them, for the Benefit and Instruction of the rest. By this they learnt the Christian Religion themselves, and were able also to teach and propagate it unto others; having thereby such a wonderful Variety and Fluency of Language, as enabled them to discover to all Men the wonderful Works of God. This the Apostle calls here their being *enrich'd*, and elsewhere their *abounding in all Utterance*; 2 Cor. 8. 7.

Next, he tells us, they were enrich'd and abounded in *all Knowledg*; that is, in the Knowledg of all the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. They had the understanding of Prophecies, and the discerning of Christ in them, which was one of the richest and most exalted parts of Knowledg;

ledg; insomuch that what was to *the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks Foolishness*, was discern'd by them to be *the Power of God unto Salvation*. St. Paul prefer'd this above all other Knowledg, and therefore instill'd it into these *Corinthians*, who abounded in this rich Treasure of Divine Knowledg; which they learnt likewise from him, in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledg. Moreover, the Apostle adds,

(2.) That by this Grace of God, *the Testimony of Christ was confirm'd in them*: meaning, that by preaching the Gospel to them, the Testimony which they before gave of Christ is abundantly made good and confirm'd in them; viz. that he was the promis'd Messiah, and that great Prophet that was to come to teach and to save Mankind. Of this the Light and Knowledg they had receiv'd of him afforded Evidence enough to remove all Doubts out of Mens Minds concerning him; and the good Fruits they had already reap'd from this Belief of him, was a sufficient Argument to incline them and others to consent to the Truth of it.

From all which the Apostle infers, in the next Verse, concerning these *Corinthians*, that *they came behind in no Gift*, that was necessary to the Demonstration of the Gospel, or the Salvation of their own Souls; so that now there was no need of any farther Addition to be made to them, but only to persevere in their Faith unto the end; *waiting for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, when he shall appear in Glory with his holy Angels, to crown his faithful Servants with endless Felicity, and to bring everlasting Destruction upon all his Enemies. Adding withal,

That if they do their part, *Christ will confirm them unto the end*, and give them Grace to hold out to that time, that *they may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and may be found true and sincere Christians, when that time shall come.

Thus we see the Sum and Sense of the Epistle for this Day, which contains St. Paul's rejoicing and giving of thanks in the behalf of the *Corinthians*, for the Grace of God given unto them by Jesus Christ, and for their Faith in the Gospel; shewing the many and great Benefits they receiv'd by it at present, and the much greater Happiness they might expect from it hereafter.

It remains only to infer some practical Lessons from the several Parts of it. And,

1. From the Apostle's thanking of God for the Grace bestow'd on these *Corinthians*, and the Benefits receiv'd thereby, we may learn to congratulate the Good that others enjoy, as well as our selves, and to thank God for one another's Welfare. There are some of so narrow and stingy a Spirit, as to look no farther than themselves, and to have little or no regard to the Good of others. They may perhaps be sensible, and in some measure grateful too, for the Mercies they receive themselves; but are too insensible and unthankful too for whatever is confer'd on their Neighbours, tho perhaps they themselves may reap some Benefit by it.

This is what *St. Paul* complain'd of to the *Philippians*, that he knew no Man *like-minded* with himself, *that would naturally care for their State; for all seek their own, but none the things that are of Jesus Christ.* Phil. 2. 19, 20.

There are others of a worse or more malignant Spirit, that never look on the Good of others, but with an evil and envious Eye, and instead of rejoicing in it, and thanking God for it, only repine and murmur at it. This is a wicked and diabolical Temper, that like the evil Spirits, is griev'd at the Good, and pleas'd with the Evil that befalls their Neighbour; but *St. Paul* here teaches better things, to rejoice in the Gifts and Graces given to others, and to be thankful to God for them, as well as our own.

2. From the Riches of Divine Grace convey'd to these *Corinthians* by the preaching of the Gospel, we may learn to set a due Price and Value upon the Light of the Gospel, and the many inestimable Blessings we receive by it. If we weigh things aright, we cannot raise our Thoughts too high of this transcendent Privilege; for without it we should, like the benighted Heathens, walk on still in Darkness; and being left to the blind and uncertain Conduct of Nature, be unavoidably bewilder'd, and lose our way to Heaven. We had then been destitute of all saving Knowledg of God, of Christ, and of our selves, and so must have groped on in the dark to our utter Ruin. But now, by the preaching of the Gospel, we are thorowly instructed in all these, and infallibly directed in the Way that leads to true Happiness. This is a Mercy that is highly worthy of our loudest Praises and Thanksgivings, and may teach us to make a right Use and Improvement of it. While we

Epistle for the 18th Sunday after Trinity. 393

we have the Light (saith the Apostle) let us walk in the Light, and work by it, lest our Ingratitude and Abuse of it cause it to be withdrawn from us, and so lose an invaluable Blessing, which we knew not how to use. The Neglect or Contempt of it will heighten both our Sin and our Punishment; and better had it been, not to have had the Gospel and the Means of Grace, than to despise or neglect them, and to turn the deaf Ear to its Calls and Admonitions. This we shall do well to remember before it be too late, lest the Night come too fast upon us, and this prove at last to be *our Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, but we loved Darkness rather than Light, because our Deeds were evil.* John 3.

3. The Testimony given of Christ being so fully confirm'd by the Gifts and Graces of the Gospel, let us learn to persevere in the Faith, and Love of the Truth, even to the end. This the Apostle exhorts to in all his Epistles, to continue steadfast in the Faith, and not to be shaken by the Subtlety of false Teachers, many of whom are gone abroad into the World, to deprave or destroy the Faith. There are other Temptations from the Allurements of the World and the Flesh, which we are to labour by the Grace of God to withstand and conquer.

To which end, the Apostle, in the last place, **directs** us to wait for the second Coming of our Lord Jesus, who shall confirm us unto the end. The continual expecting and preparing for that Day, will keep us always upon our watch, and fortify us against the Wiles of the Wicked: 'twill make us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, and daily move us forward in our Christian Course; and by that means we shall be found blameless and unreprouable in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ: which God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.



D I S-



DISCOURSE XLVII.

The GOSPEL for the Eighteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Matthew xxii. 34, to the end.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gather'd together. Then one of them, who was a Lawyer, asked him a Question, tempting him and saying, Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law, &c.

WE pray in the Collect for this Day for Grace to withstand the Temptations of the World, &c. The Epistle gave us an Instance of it in some of the *Corinthians*, who by the Grace of the Gospel successfully withstood them. But the Gospel for the Day furnishes us with a much higher and better Instance of it, in the Person of our Saviour, who was set upon by the *Sadducees*, *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*, with all the Art and Subtlety of Temptation; and yet we read that he effectually withstood, worsted, and silenc'd them all. We read elsewhere how he vanquish'd the Power and Temptations of the Devil, *Mat. 4.* and here how he baffled the Wisdom and Wickedness of the World.

The Gospel begins thus, *When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, &c.* The *Sadducees* were a Sect among the Jews, that deny'd Angels and Spirits, and said there was no Resurrection. Accordingly, some of them, to expose the Resurrection, and to entrap our Saviour, came to him with this captious Question, concerning a Woman that had seven Husbands, asking, *In the resurrection whose Wife shall she be of the seven, for they all had her?* Jesus knowing their Wickedness, reply'd, *Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the Power of God:* meaning, that they discover'd their great Ignorance of a future State; *For in the Resurrection they neither marry nor are*
given

Gospel for the 18th Sunday after Trinity. 395

given in Marriage, but are as the Angels of God in Heaven: The Relation of Husband and Wife is only during this Life, and is dissolv'd and swallow'd up in the next. And as touching the Resurrection of the Dead, he quoted to them out of the Law, which they held in great estimation, that God was *the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*, who being all dead, must rise and live again; *for God is not the God of the Dead, but of the Living*. Upon the hearing hereof, they were all astonish'd, and could make him no Answer. And then it follows, when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gather'd together, with a design to set upon him, and to intangle him in his Talk. Then one of them, who was a Lawyer or a Scribe, asked him a Question, tempting him and saying, *Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law?* This Question was mov'd not with a Desire to be satisfy'd, but with a Design to ensnare him in his Answer, and to hear what he would say. This Way and Method of their dealing with our Saviour by insidious and intangling Questions, hath been sufficiently laid open in the Gospel for the Sunday immediately before this, and therefore I shall add no more here concerning it.

As for the Answer here given to this ensnaring Question of the Lawyer, it was such as he could no way gainsay or object against, *viz. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and thy Neighbour as thy self*. Both which being explain'd in the Gospel for the thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, I shall refer the Reader to it.

All that will be requisite to add here, is about the Order and Greatness of these Commandments: for the Lawyer's Question being, *Which is the great Commandment in the Law?* our Saviour told him, that the loving of God above all things, *is the first and great Commandment*; and the loving our Neighbour as our selves, *is the second, and like unto it*: and that *upon these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*. Each of which will require a little Explication. And,

First, How is the Love of God said to be the first Commandment? Why, partly in Order of Time, and partly in Order of Nature.

1st, I say, 'tis so in Order of Time; the Love of God being the first thing to be taught and learnt of all that come to

to him ; for all true Religion begins with it, and is founded upon it : 'tis the first Step we are to make towards our Maker, and that will lead us on to all the other parts of our Duty and Obedience to him. He that begins betimes with the Love of God, will move on cheerfully after in the Ways of his Commandments : but he who is not touch'd with an unfeigned Love of him, will be still wandering in the By-paths of Sin and Iniquity. So that our first and principal Care should be, to set our Hearts right towards God, and to turn the Stream of our Affections to him ; and that will keep us right ever after.

2dly, The Love of God is the first in Order of Nature, as being the Root and Spring of all other Vertues. He that truly loves God, will fear him above all things, will trust in all Conditions, will honour him in all his Actions, will worship him at all times, and in a word will serve and depend upon him in the whole Course of his Life. All these Vertues grow and thrive upon a Stock of Love ; whereas he that wants or casts off the Love of his Maker, will soon feel a Decay in all these Graces, and become an utter Stranger and Enemy to the Ways of God : which should teach us to be rooted and grounded in Love, the *First Commandment*. But,

Secondly, How is the loving of God said to be the *great Commandment*? Why,

1st, Upon the account of the Greatness and Dignity of the Object ; it being conversant about God, the greatest and noblest of all Beings. For tho' all other Graces have some relation to him, having God for their Author ; yet there is none that so immediately relates to him, as this of Love, having the Divine Nature and Perfections for its Object, and being wholly employ'd in the Contemplation and Admiration of them. Now the Greatness of the Object ever adds a Value and Dignity to the Act relating to it ; as the serving of a King is greater than the serving of a Subject. Now what greater and sublimer Object can there be, than the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whose transcendent Excellencies render him infinitely lovely in himself, and whose superlative Bounty makes him in the highest measure amiable unto us? And therefore this Precept of Love, which is so directly employ'd and terminated in him, must be the great Commandment : and so it is,

2dly,

2dly, Upon the account of the Largeness and Comprehensiveness of it; for it includes in it all other Vertues, and comprizes the whole Duty of Man. Hence St. Paul styles *Love the fulfilling of the Law*, because it restrains from all things forbidden in it, and constrains to all things agreeable to and commanded by it. And therefore we find Love sometimes call'd *the old Commandment*, being requir'd from the beginning, and made a Principle of Nature, as well as a Precept of *Moses's Law*: sometimes *a new Commandment*, being renew'd by Christ, and enforc'd upon us by higher Motives: sometimes *all the Commandments*, because it contains and runs thro them all, and is the great Wheel that moves all our Obedience to him; for which reason 'tis justly reckon'd the great Commandment. As also,

3dly, Upon the account of the Influence it hath upon all the Parts and Duties of Religion, which have all their Worth and Acceptance intirely from it: for where the Love of God is, there every thing is accepted; but where that is wanting, nothing can be well-pleasing to him. The most weak and imperfect Service will not miss of a Reward, if the Heart be sound and right towards God; whereas the most solemn and pompous Performances without that, are but an Abomination to him. Now that which gives all Worth and Excellence to other things, must it self be most excellent; and consequently, the loving of God procuring all Audience to our Prayers, and all Acceptance to our good Works, must for that reason be justly accounted *the great Commandment*. And so it is,

Lastly, Upon the account of its perpetual and everlasting Duration. Love is a permanent Grace, and a Vertue that will abide for ever; 'tis the Comfort of this Life, and the Happiness of the next. When all other Accomplishments of Art and Nature shall cease and vanish away, Charity will never fail, and the Love of God will be constant and continue for ever; 'twill go along with us into the other World, and there make up the greatest part of our Felicity: for when Faith shall be swallow'd up in Vision, and Hope in Fruition, then shall Love remain, and be exalted to the highest Perfection. All which plainly prove the loving of God to be *the first and great Commandment*. From whence I proceed,

In the next place, to shew that the loving our Neighbour is *the second, and like unto it*. And so it is,

(1.) In

398 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

(1.) In respect of the Authority that commands it, and our Obligation to observe it, which is the same in both. He that requires us to love God, hath requir'd us to love our Brother also; and as the one is to be lov'd with all the Heart and Soul, &c. so is the other to be lov'd even as our selves: the same Divine Authority is stamp'd on both, and therefore both are equally to be receiv'd and practis'd. He that offends in either of these Points, is guilty of all: for he that said, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart*, said also, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*. The former is indeed the first and great Commandment, but the latter is the second, and like unto it; and he that doth the one without the other, is a Transgressor of the Law: yea, he that saith he loves God, and hateth his Brother, is a Lyar, and the Truth is not in him. By which it appears that both these Commandments agree in the Act of Love, and likewise in the Authority that commands them, which is the same in both. Moreover,

(2.) The second is like unto the first, in respect of the Ground and Motive of our Obedience, which are some divine Perfections residing in God, and communicated to his Creatures. Our Love to Man is grounded upon the Love of God; and we depart not from the Love of our Maker, by loving our Neighbour, but rather heighten and increase it: for 'tis for God's sake, and upon his account, that we pay this Affection to his Creature. Indeed, we are to love God for himself, for his own infinite and adorable Perfections; and we are to love our Neighbour for the Likeness and Relation he bears to him, and for the sake of those Excellencies he hath deriv'd upon him. So that both being founded upon the same Motive, may well enough be liken'd one to the other. Again,

(3.) The second is like unto the first, in respect of the Extent and Comprehensiveness of it: for as the Love of God includes the whole of that Duty and Homage we owe unto him, so the Love of our Neighbour comprizes all the good Offices we are to pay unto him. And therefore St. Paul hath summ'd up the whole Decalogue in this one word, and stiles Love the fulfilling of the Law; for he that loveth another (saith he) hath fulfill'd the Law. For this, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false Witness, Thou shalt not covet*; and if there be any other Commandment, 'tis briefly comprehended in this Saying, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy*

thy self. Rom. 13. 8, 9. Where all the Precepts that concern the Good and Welfare of our Neighbour are summ'd up in the loving of him; and so for the Fulness and Largeness of it, 'tis like to the former. And so it is,

Lastly, In respect of the Reward and Punishment that attend the keeping or breaking of it, which is the same in both. We read in the 25th of *Matthew*, that all Acts of Love and Charity done to the afflicted Members of Christ, are taken to be done to Christ himself; and all Neglect of them to our poor Neighbour, are interpreted as a Contempt of Christ, and both are rewarded or punish'd accordingly: the former with, *Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit a Kingdom*; the latter with, *Go ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, &c.* Where the Love of our Neighbour hath the same Reward annex'd to it with the Love of God, and the Hatred of our Brother hath the same Punishment with the Hatred of God: which shews them to be much alike both in their Nature and Consequents.

To all which, our Saviour adds, that *on these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* The Sense whereof is,

1st, That all the Law and the Prophets conspire and agree in these two Commandments, and that they are consonant to all that is written or deliver'd by them; *Moses* in the beginning, and the Prophets after him, urging both these Precepts upon us. But the principal Sense of it is,

2dly, That these two Commandments comprize the whole of the Law and the Prophets: and all that is deliver'd in both, is briefly summ'd up in these two things, to love God with all our Heart, and our Neighbour as our selves. All the Doctrine of *Moses* and the Prophets, with all the Writings of the Old and New Testament, have relation to and dependence upon these Precepts: they are the two great Hinges upon which the whole Law turns, or the Pegs on which it hangs; they are the Props of the two Tables, or the great Wheels on which they move. In a word, this being the whole Substance of our Duty, we may see the Excellency, the Equity, and the Easiness of God's Laws; which requiring nothing from us but Love, the sweetest and most pleasing of all Passions, and that too of the highest and best Objects, viz. God and our Neighbour, we may not complain of his Laws as difficult, or decline

decline them as unreasonable, but rather say with the Apostle, *his Commandments are not grievous.*

Thus we see how wisely our Saviour answer'd the Cavils of this carping Lawyer, not only eluding his captious and ensnaring Question, but instructing him in two necessary and weighty Duties.

But while the Pharisees were gather'd together, and before they parted, Jesus thought fit to puzzle and put them to silence, by moving to them a Question in their own way; saying, *What think ye of Christ, whose Son is he? or of whose Stock is he to come? They say unto him, the Son of David, of whose Loins and Lineage he was to descend.* Then Jesus reply'd to them, *How then doth David in Spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my Right Hand, till I make thine Enemies thy Footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son? And no Man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any Man (from that day forth) ask him any more Questions.* This Question of our Saviour's posed them all, and put them quite out of their former Course of asking Questions, finding they could take no advantage against him.

This is the Sum of the Gospel for this Day; from which we may observe,

1. The great Trouble our Saviour had from the Sectaries of his time, and from thence we may not wonder if we find the same or the like from the Sectaries of our days. The *Sadducees, Scribes, and Pharisees* were the principal Dissenters and Separatists in the Jewish Church, the two former pretending to greater Knowledge, the latter to greater Sanctity and Holiness than other Men; all of them setting up their own Wisdom above that of the Church, and separating from each other upon Pretences of greater Purity and Edification. To which ends they often set upon Christ and his Apostles with all the Arts of Insinuation and intangling Queries, to undermine the Doctrine establish'd and preach'd by them: and this was the Occasion of the many Precepts to Unity, and the many Cautions against Divisions, that are extant in the New Testament. The like Methods of Insinuation and Queries are still used by the Dissenters and Sectaries of our days, together with the like Cabals and Contrivances for the countenancing and propagating their Divisions. And as Christ and his Apostles fought then by the extraordinary Methods of Miracles and Doctrine to oppose

pose those Gainsayers, so are we still to endeavour to put them to silence, by the ordinary ways of Argument or Authority.

2. If the *loving of God be the first and great Commandment*, then this ought to be first minded and endeavour'd by us, that we may be rooted and grounded in the Love of him; and that growing and increasing in us, will lead us to all the other parts of our Duty to him. To which end, we are to think often of his infinite and adorable Perfections, together with his unspeakable Love and Kindness to us, which are great enough to engage and inflame our Affections: adding hereunto our daily Prayers, that he would shed abroad his Love into our Hearts, that we may no longer resist his powerful Charms, and that we may at last obtain that Crown of Life, which he hath promis'd and prepar'd for them that love him.

3. If the *Love of our Neighbour be the second Commandment, and like unto the first*, then ought this in the next place to be minded and labour'd for: and let us not think (as too many do) that their Duty to God will excuse them from their Duty to their Neighbour. We may not make the two Tables of the Law to clash or interfere with one another, nor think that the keeping of the one will atone for the breaking of the other; but being both alike in their Authority and Obligation, they are to be equally kept and observ'd by us, loving God for his own, and our Neighbour for his sake. And,

Lastly, If *on these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*, then all our Hopes and Expectations must depend upon the Observation of them. The Will of God must not be perform'd by halves, nor may we hope to enter into Life without keeping both these Commandments. And as God hath in both consulted our Good, as well as his own Glory, so let us make both the standing Rule of our Lives and Actions.





DISCOURSE XLVIII.

The EPISTLE for the Nineteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

Ephes. iv. 17, to the end.

This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the Vanity of their Mind, having the Understanding darken'd, &c.

THE Collect for this Day teaches us to pray to God, that forasmuch as without him we are not able to please him, he would mercifully grant us his Holy Spirit, in all things to direct and rule our Hearts. Accordingly,

The Epistle for the Day shews us,

First, Our utter Inability of our selves to please God, set forth by the natural State of the Gentiles before they receiv'd the Gospel.

Secondly, The gracious Aids and Assistances of God's Holy Spirit in order to please him, represented in the happy Estate of Christians by the Grace and Favour of the Gospel.

Thirdly, Some of those Rules by which the Holy Spirit in all things directs our Hearts in the right way. These things are the Sum of this Epistle, which must therefore be particularly consider'd.

First, The Epistle begins with an earnest Exhortation to the *Ephesians*, who were lately converted from Heathenism to Christianity, to lead other and better Lives than they did before their Conversion. *This I say and testify in the Lord* (saith the Apostle) *that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles, &c.* This is a matter that I am solemnly to declare and publish to you, that being become Christians, ye live no longer after the manner of Heathens, either in the Vanity of their Minds, or the Vileness of their Practices: for

for tho in times of Ignorance God wink'd at many things, yet now he commands all Men to repent, and to turn from their Idol Worship to the living God. Let your Carriage therefore be fuitable to your Privileges, and your Actions answer your Profession, which alone can render them pleasing and acceptable unto God. From whence he proceeds to let these *Ephesians* know their utter Inability to please God in their Gentile State. And that,

1st, Because *their Understandings were darken'd*, and their Minds overspread with Blindness and Ignorance. *Ye were sometimes Darkness* (saith the Apostle) *Eph. 5. 8.* Before the Light of the Gospel shone upon you, ye were not only dark, but Darkness it self, being destitute of all true Knowledg of God, of Christ, or your selves; and so were, as he expresses it, *without God, and without Christ, and without Hope in the World.* This was the forlorn Condition of the *Ephesians*, whilst they continu'd Heathens; and this is the natural State and Condition of us all, before we are receiv'd into Christ's Church and become Christians; in which Estate 'tis impossible to please God. Again,

2dly, He tells them in the next Verse, that they *were alienated from the Life of God through the Ignorance that was in them, and because of the Blindness of their Hearts*: meaning, that their want of Knowledg drove them to those courses, that depriv'd them of all spiritual Life, and made them dead in Trespases and Sins; by which means they were no more able to move in the ways of God, than a dead Carcase, which is void of all Motion: and sure in such a Condition 'tis no way possible to please God. And we too in our natural State are as far remov'd from all spiritual Life and Motion, till we are quicken'd by Divine Grace. Moreover,

3dly, He tells them in the following Verse, that they *were past feeling, and so gave themselves over unto Lasciviousness, to work all Uncleanness with greediness*: that is, their Hearts were harden'd, and their Consciences so fear'd, that they lost all the Impressions of Good and Evil; a long Course of sinning had brought that Senslessness and Benumbedness upon their Spirits, that they felt no more the weight of their Sins, than a dead Man in the Grave doth the Burden of Earth that lies upon him. This made them commit all manner of Vice and Wickedness without any Regret or Remorse, and especially the abominable Vices of Uncleanness; running as greedily after their Lusts, as a

D d 2

hungry

hungry Person does after his Victuals ; giving themselves over to all kind of Lewdness and Lasciviousness, and so falling into those beastly and unnatural Lusts, that are not to be nam'd among Christians.

This is the sad Condition of the Heathens or Gentiles, and this was the deplorable State of these *Ephesians*, before they embrac'd Christianity, of which the Apostle thought fit to put them in mind ; *Eph. 2. 12. Ye were (saith he) without Christ, Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World.* In which Condition we may well enough conclude, that neither they, nor we can do any thing of our selves to please God. From whence the Apostle proceeds, in the four following Verses, to declare the happy Change made in them, by the Light of the Gospel, and the Influence of the Divine Grace : Which will lead me,

Secondly, To the gracious Aids and Assistances of God's holy Spirit, to enable us to please him. When *St. Paul* had recited the many Miseries, and abominable Vices of the Heathens ; he adds in the next words, concerning the *Ephesians*, *But ye have not so learn'd Christ* : meaning, that they had learn'd better things from the Christian Religion, if so be that they had heard him, and been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jesus ; that is, if they had heard and receiv'd the Word aright, and been thoroughly instructed in the Truth of the Christian Doctrine, they would soon see the Error and Danger of those Ways, for that would discover to them the Deformity of their former Practices, and lead them to new and better Courses. And this he tells them, is the main Design of Christ's Religion, that ye should learn thereby to put off concerning the former Conversation the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts : that is, that ye should change your former Course of Life, and cast off those vile and sinful Practices that lead to such foul and filthy Lusts. And be renew'd in the Spirit of your Mind ; that it may be set on new and better things. Which is express'd in the next words, by putting on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness : that is, that ye seek to beget in you new Desires, new Purposes, and Pursuits after greater and nobler Objects, that ye may be restor'd again to that lost Image of God, which consists in a sincere Piety and Purity of Mind.

This

Epistle for the 19th Sunday after Trinity. 405

This is what the Apostle hop'd and pray'd for in the behalf of these *Ephesians*, upon their receiving the Gospel, and becoming Christians: that the Change of their Mind might be accompanied with a Change of their Life, and their new Principles engage them to new Practices according to them; by which alone they could be enabled to please God, and to do things acceptable to him. All which are owing to the Light of the Gospel, and the blessed Influences of God's Holy Spirit working by it. And this will lead me, in the

Third Place, to the Rules here given by the Holy Spirit to direct our Hearts aright in the Ways of Christianity; and these Directions take up the remaining Part of this Chapter. The great general Direction to these *Ephesians*, is, that henceforth they walk not as other *Gentiles* walk'd in the Vanity of their Minds, but that they shun all the Deeds of Darkness practis'd by them, and walk as Children of the Light, and as becometh Christians. To which end, the

1st Rule given to them, is to avoid lying, and to speak nothing but Truth in their Commerce and Communication with one another; *ver. 25. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour, for we are Members one of another.* Lying was one of the great Sins and Abominations of the Heathens, who having little or no regard to Truth, dealt chiefly in Falshood and Deceit. 'Tis one of the Works of the Devil, who is a lying Spirit in the Mouths of all that are given to it: *Ye are of your Father the Devil* (saith our Saviour) *and the Works of your Father ye will do, for he was a Lyar from the beginning, and the Father of it. When he speaketh a Lye, he speaketh of his own, for he was the first Inventor, and is still the great Sollicitor to it. Why hath Satan fill'd thy Heart* (saith St. Peter to *Ananias*) *that thou shouldst lye unto the Holy Ghost?* Acts 5. 3. 'Tis the Devil that puts it into Mens Hearts to falsify and utter Lyes: and therefore however you liv'd in these things whilst ye continued Heathens, yet now being Christians you must abhor and abandon them; for lying is directly opposite and provoking to the Holy Spirit, who is a Spirit of Truth, and desireth Truth in the inner and outward Parts. And because out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh, we must first cleanse the Fountain, that the Streams issuing from it may be pure and clean:

D d 3

clean: Wash thine Heart from Wickedness, and then thy Tongue will be free from Deceit, then wilt thou speak nothing but Truth to thy Neighbour; which should be the rather done, because *we are Members one of another*: we are Members of the same natural Body, as Men; and of the same mystical Body, as Christians; and therefore should be true and faithful to one another.

2dly, Another Direction here given, is to avoid all rash and immoderate Anger, in the next Verses; *Be angry and sin not, let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath, neither give place to the Devil*. This was likewise another great Sin of the *Gentiles*, who let loose the Reins to inordinate Passions, and thereby created Brawls and bloody Contentions; but it must not be so among Christians, they are to restrain and bridle their Passions by the Grace of Meekness, and to keep themselves from all sinful and excessive Anger: for though Men may be sometimes angry without Sin, yet they may never be so without a Cause; neither should any small or slight thing inflame us, for nothing but great and weighty Matters are able to justify a Passion. Moreover, where there may be a just Cause of Anger, it must not rise too high, or kindle too great a Flame, but must be kept within due bounds, and not break out into bitter and contumelious Language; nor must it continue too long to bake into Rancour and Malice, but we must make all haste to subdue that Rage, and to be reconcil'd to our offending Brother. We may *not let the Sun go down upon our Wrath*: that is, it must not continue to the Evening, but be remov'd before Sun-set, lest it hinder our evening Prayer; wherein we beg Forgiveness of God, as we forgive our Brethren. *Plutarch* tells us of the *Pythagoreans*, that if any Anger or Quarrel arose among them, they were before the Sun went down to shake hands and be made friends; which is the Apostle's Lesson here to these *Ephesians*, not to harbour any secret Grudges, but to suppress all causeless and inordinate Anger: And the rather, because to give way to unruly Passions, is to *give place to the Devil*; 'tis to suffer the Evil-one to get ground upon us, and to be led away by his wicked Suggestions. Contrary whereunto, we are here taught to be led by the Spirit of God into the Ways of Peace, Meekness, and Reconciliation, and to agree with our Adversary quickly, as becometh Christians.

Epistle for the 19th Sunday after Trinity. 407

3dly, Another Direction here given, is to avoid Theft, and to labour for an honest Livelihood, in the following words; *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his Hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Stealing was another Sin that was rife, and commonly practis'd among the Gentiles, who having little or no sense of Property, brake down the Inclosures of Right, and invaded one another. Their Ignorance of God and his Laws led them into all the Acts of Rapine and Injustice without any Remorse, whereas these things are set in a better Light by the Gospel, and we more clearly see the Evil and Danger of them: and if the Heathens, who had only the dim Light of Nature and Reason to direct them, were left without Excuse in these Matters; how much more inexcusable shall we be, who beside that have the clearer Light of Revelation to guide us in them? Let none then that pretend to be Christians, prove Thieves or Robbers; or if any have been found guilty of this Sin, let them reform and *steal no more*, but rather learn by their own *Labour* to earn their own living: for Theft is the Effect of Idleness, and the lazy Person hath no Way of living but by stealing; to prevent which, let them *work with their Hands*, if they are engag'd in any Handicraft or mechanical Employments; or with their Heads, if they are set in higher Stations for the publick Good, that they may have sufficient not only for their own Necessities and Conveniences, but to supply the Wants of those that need.

4thly, Another Direction here given, is to avoid all corrupt Communication, which leads to all the unnatural Lusts and Uncleaness of the Gentiles: Ver. 29. *Let no corrupt Communication come out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister Grace to the Hearers.* Evil Communication corrupts good Manners, whereas good Discourse tends to instil Knowledg, and increase Piety. The Tongue, if employ'd aright, is the Glory of a Man; but if us'd otherwise, is a Shame and Reproach to him, being an Instrument and Incentive to much Wickedness. Leud Talk proceeds from a corrupt Heart, and brings on corrupt Practices, as foul Streams issue from a corrupt Fountain, and going on contract greater Foulness; and therefore our Saviour wills that our Communication be yea, yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of Evil, *Mat. 5.* All Additions of Obscenity or Swearing

Dd 4

Swearing are from the Devil, and lead to him : and therefore should be as carefully shunn'd and avoided, as we flee from Poison and Infection. To all which the Apostle adds,

5thly, A Caution against grieving the Holy Spirit of God, *by whom ye are seal'd unto the Day of Redemption* ; ver. 30. *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God*, which is done by the foremention'd Vices : for the Spirit of God being a Spirit of Truth, cannot but be offended with Lying and Falshood ; as also being a Spirit of Meekness, must be displeas'd with all inordinate Passion ; being a Spirit of Justice and Integrity, cannot away with the evil Arts of Dishonesty and Double-Dealing ; and, lastly, being a Spirit of Purity, is griev'd at all Impurity of Words or Actions. All which Evils being so directly contrary to the Nature and Office of the Holy Spirit, will, if persisted in without Repentance, cause him to withdraw his Grace and Presence from us. But beside these, there are two things that do more especially grieve and provoke the Holy Spirit of God ; and they are, the quenching its good Motions, and the stifling and abusing its Gifts. For the

(1.) The Holy Spirit of God, either by the Calls of his Holy Word, or the secret Checks and Whispers of our own Conscience, often minds us of our Duty, and persuades to it ; it gives us to hear a Voice behind or within us, saying, *This is the way, walk in it*, when we are turning to the right Hand or to the left. Hence it cheers and comforts us, when we go aright ; and reprehends and troubles us, when we go astray. Now the hearkening to these good Motions, rejoices the Holy Spirit, and causes him to abide with us ; but the turning the deaf Ear or suppressing of them, grieves and drives him from us. Again,

(2.) The Holy Spirit of God is pleas'd to bestow many Gifts and Talents upon us, for the Good of our selves and others ; which if we use and employ aright to the Ends for which they are given, this Holy Spirit will be so far pleas'd as to pronounce us good and faithful Servants now, and reward us at last with an Entrance into our Master's Joy : but if we neglect or abuse them, that is, if we neither use them at all, or use them amiss ; he will be so far displeas'd as to deprive us of them, and not only withdraw the Light of his Grace here, but doom us to everlasting Darkness hereafter : which should make us careful to please, and afraid to grieve him. And that because 'tis by *this Spirit that we are seal'd to the Day of Redemption* ; that is,

as Goods that are bought are wont to be mark'd with the Buyer's Seal or Mark, so the Spirit of God is the Seal by which we are mark'd for the purchas'd and redeem'd People of God. Where there is an Allusion to those Places or Countries, where Men are as ordinarily bought, as any other Commodity, in which nothing is more ordinary than to set a Seal or Mark upon them, either in their Forehead, or in some other part, to distinguish them from other Mens Servants. In like manner, the Servants of God are distinguish'd from others by this Seal of the Spirit: so the Apostle tells us, *The Foundation of God standeth sure, having this Seal, the Lord knoweth who are his*; being hereby seal'd to the great *Day of Redemption*.

Finally, The Apostle to conclude all, exhorts these *Ephesians*, that *all Bitterness of Spirit, all Wrath and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from them, with all Malice*. All which being so opposite and displeasing to the Spirit of God, which is to direct and rule our Hearts, they should above all things labour to subdue and mortify, as contrary to the Commands of Christ, and the Spirit of the Gospel, which they had receiv'd: Adding in the Close, that instead of those black Passions before rehears'd, they should *be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake had forgiven them*. These are some of the prime and peculiar Vertues of Christianity, and some of the principal Graces of God's Holy Spirit, which teaches us an universal Kindness to all Men, a compassionate Tenderness for all their Infirmities, and a ready Forgiveness of all little Injuries and Indignities; for all which Christ hath given both his Command and Example.

This is the Sum of the Epistle for this Day, wherein what *St. Paul* saith here to the *Ephesians*, he saith unto all Christians, and to us especially, who are of the *Gentile Race*: and therefore having by the Light of the Gospel, the Vices of the Heathens, and the Vertues of Christians so clearly discover'd to us, let us all learn heartily to forsake the former, and follow the latter to our Lives end: Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE XLIX.

The GOSPEL for the Nineteenth Sunday after
Trinity.

St. Matthew ix. 1—9.

Jesus entered into a Ship, and passed over, and came into his own City; and behold they brought to him a Man sick of the Palsy, lying on a Bed, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day contains an Account of a Miracle wrought by our Saviour, in healing a Person sick of the Palsy; in the relating whereof we may observe,

First, The Circumstances leading to it.

Secondly, What happen'd at the time of working it. And,

Thirdly, What follow'd after it.

First, For the Circumstances leading to it. We read in the first Verse, that Jesus entred into a Ship, and passed over: He was then on the other side of the Water, in the Country of the Gergesens, where he dispossess'd a Legion of Devils out of two Men possess'd with them; which Spirits entering into a Herd of Swine, they ran violently down a steep place into the Sea, and perish'd in the Waters. The People, astonish'd at the seeing or hearing hereof, went all out of the City to meet Jesus; and being terrify'd at the Greatness of his Power, or troubled for the Loss of their Swine, instead of desiring more of his Company, they besought him, that he would depart out of their Coasts: Hereupon he entred into a Ship, and passed over to the other side, and came into his own City; that is, into Capernaum, a City in Galilee, call'd his own City, because he then had his Habitation, and dwelt there. The former Place of his Abode was Nazareth, the Place of his Conception and Education;

Gospel for the 19th Sunday after Trinity. 411

Education; for which, as also for his long Continuance there, he is often call'd *Jesus of Nazareth*. During his Abode there he liv'd in constant Communion with the Jewish Church, of which he was a Member; for *St. Luke* tells us, that *his Custom was to go into the Synagogue every Sabbath-day*; where he sometimes stood up to read, and teach the People: *Luke 4. 16*. Though the People of *Nazareth* were none of the best, as appears by that proverbial Saying, *Can any Good come out of Nazareth?* yet he made no Separation, and blam'd the *Pharisees* for so doing upon Pretences of greater Purity. So great a Lover was *Jesus Christ* of the Peace and Unity of the Church, for which he gave both his Precept and Example, contrary to the Practice of some seeming Zealots in our Days, who for worldly Ends rend and divide the Christian Church.

But to go on, *Christ leaving Nazareth, came and dwelt in Capernaum*, which is upon the Sea-Coast, in the Borders of *Zabulon* and *Naphthali*; as we read, *Matth. 4. 13*. When he came there, he began to preach and to expound to the People the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; insomuch that *they who before sate in Darkness, saw great Light, and to them which sate in the Region and Shadow of Death, is Light sprung up*; ver. 16, 17. of that Chapter. The Fame of his Doctrine, which was confirm'd by many Miracles, brought much People unto him: among the rest, we are here told in our Text, that upon his Return to his own City, or Dwelling-place at *Capernaum*, *Behold, they brought to him a Man sick of the Palsy, lying on a Bed*. Sometimes they brought or carry'd infirm, diseased and possessed People unto him; at other times he himself went to them that were unable to come: sometimes he sent Salvation to them, and by his Word spake them whole at a distance, it being all one to his Divine Power to cure them present or absent. Here they brought to him a Paralytick, that was so sick and shaken with a Palsy, that he could neither stand nor go, and so could only be brought lying on a Bed.

But how was he receiv'd? Did our Saviour refuse to see him, or to take the trouble of the Cure? Did he disdain his Poverty, or dismiss him without hearing or healing of him? No, he was so far from refusing any, that he sought out Objects for his Mercy and Compassion to work upon; he was never weary, but still went up and down doing Good; his Will was always as ready as his Power,

Power, and his Goodness as both. Poverty and Sickness were the Motives of his Mercy, and the Misery and Meanness of any one's Condition rather help'd than hinder'd the Influence of his Bounty. Accordingly his Bowels yearn'd towards this sick Person, and *seeing their Faith*, which he did by this extraordinary way of bringing him to him, *said unto the sick of the Palsy, Son, be of good cheer*; he was affected towards him as a Father is to a Son, and pitied him as much as a Parent doth his own Child whom he loveth: Son, saith he; and what a loving Compellation is that to a Stranger, and in Distress too, and from the Mouth of the Son of God? How was he transported, think you, at so dear and gracious a Title, or what might he not expect from one, who at first sight took him into so near a Relation; *Son, be of good cheer*? What reviving Words were these to this poor Paralytick? A Cordial higher than the strongest Potion, especially coming from the Lips of so Divine a Person.

But what were the Ingredients in it, that could administer so much Comfort? Why, that the next words declare, *Son, be of good cheer, thy Sins be forgiven thee*: Words that drop the greatest Sweetness, and are able to revive the most fainting Spirit; for next to Health, which he afterward restor'd, what could more comfort a sick Person, than the Forgiveness of his Sins, which is far better than Health or Life it self? And therefore before he remov'd the Distempers of his Body, or cur'd his Palsy, he thought fit to heal the greater Maladies of his Soul, and to seal his Pardon to him; well knowing that both Soul and Body would fare well enough when that was done.

But certain of the Scribes, whose Eyes were evil, because his were good, *said within themselves*, for they durst not speak it openly, *This Man blasphemeth, for who can forgive Sins, save God only*? Where, by reasoning among themselves, they sought to charge him with Blasphemy, partly to render him odious to the People, by usurping upon God, and assuming to himself the sole incommunicable Prerogative of forgiving of Sins; and partly to bring him under the Censure and Penalty of the Law against Blasphemy, which was to be stoned to death: for so we read, *Levit. 24. 16. He that blasphemeth the Name of the Lord shall surely be put to death, and all the Congregation shall certainly stone him, as well the Stranger, as he that dwelleth in the Land; when he blasphemeth the Name of the Lord, he shall be put to death.* Thus we find that when Christ said, *I and my Father*

Gospel for the 19th Sunday after Trinity. 413

Father are one, they said he blasphemed, and were taking up of Stones to stone him; *John* 10. 30, 31. And when he stil'd himself *The Son of God*, they ask'd him, Why blasphemest thou, saying, I am the Son of God? and were again for stoning him; *ver.* 36. Blasphemy is a Sin that lieth in the Face of Heaven, by detracting from the Honour of God, or invading his Attributes, and justly deserves the severest Punishment; and being so heinous and capital a Crime, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, the bitter Enemies of our Saviour, sought to fasten it upon him, and thereby either to put him to death, or to put a stop to the spreading of his Doctrine.

But *Jesus*, knowing their Thoughts, which, being Searcher of the Hearts, could not be hid from him, said unto them, *Why think ye Evil in your Hearts?* which was but a gentle Reproof for so vile an Accusation; Why do ye entertain such hard Thoughts, or harbour in your Hearts such malicious Designs? And the better to convince them of the Folly of their evil and unjust Surmises, he makes a Comparison between the Power of forgiving of Sins, and the Power of giving Health to a sick Man by a word's speaking; asking the Question, *Whether is easier to say, Thy Sins be forgiven thee? or to say, Arise and walk?* And tho both these are equally easy and feasible to a Divine Power, yet, because they vainly thought it a higher and more difficult thing to cure this diseased Man by a Word, than to forgive him his Sins, he was pleas'd to do that which they judg'd most difficult, to convince them that he could do that which they esteem'd more easy; and so argu'd with them *a majori ad minus*, from his doing the greater to his Ability of doing the less: and that the same Divine Power, that was able to restore Health to his Body by a word's speaking, was able likewise to save his Soul, by sealing to him the Pardon of his Sins; the same Infinite and Almighty Power being requir'd to both.

Now here follows the Miracle, for their Satisfaction, in the next words; *That ye may know that the Son of Man* (whom you are so apt to despise) *bath Power on Earth*, as well as in Heaven, *to forgive Sins*; then saith he to the Sick of the Palsy, *Arise, take up thy Bed, and go unto thine House*: Upon the uttering of which Words, he immediately arose, and departed to his own House. These healing words of our Saviour chased away his Disease, rid him of his Palsy, and restor'd

restor'd him perfectly sound and whole. He who was borne on the Shoulders of four Men to our Saviour, was very well able to go home alone; and he who before depended wholly upon the Strength of others, was now able to walk by his own: he bore the Bed upon his Shoulders, that before bore him, and return'd more nimbly to his House than his former Bearers.

This is the Miracle, which we read and ought to meditate upon this Day, and is indeed well worthy of it, being a Miracle truly great and divine in sundry respects: As,

1st, In respect of the Author, who was no less a Person than the Son of God, and God blessed for ever: His daily and ordinary Actions highly deserve our Notice and Observation, but his miraculous Acts much more. The Jews were charged and upbraided with Ingratitude for not considering the Works of the Lord, nor regarding the Operations of his Hand; but how much more may Christians be upbraided with it, if they regard not the Miracles of Christ, which so vastly exceeded all that was done or recorded by *Moses* and the Prophets? *Corazin* and *Bethsaida*, who heard the Doctrine, and saw the Miracles of Christ, were threaten'd with a heavier Doom than *Tyre* and *Sidon*, who were never bless'd with either; and *Capernaum*, where this and many other Miracles were perform'd, were said to be lifted up to Heaven in their Privileges, and therefore should sink so much the deeper into Hell, for their not believing and amending by them. In like manner sad will be the Account of the Deists and Infidels of our Age, for doubting or denying the Truth of these Miracles, which stand upon Record in the Gospel, and were confirm'd beyond all reasonable Contradiction.

2^{dly}, This Miracle was great in respect of the Person upon whom it was wrought, who labour'd under those great and incurable Distempers, which neither Nature nor Art were ever able to remove, and yet were soon and easily cur'd by his Divine Hand: Which shews it,

3^{dly}, To be great, and worth Consideration, in respect of the wonderful Manner of effecting it, which was not by the natural and ordinary Ways and Methods of Physick, but only by a Word of his Mouth; for he no sooner said, *Arise, take up thy Bed and walk*, but presently he, who before was not able to move hand or foot, was able to do all these.

Lastly,

Lastly, This Miracle was great in respect of the End for which it was wrought; and that was partly to confirm the Divinity of Christ's Person, and partly to confirm the Truth of the Doctrine deliver'd by him: both which were abundantly prov'd by such Works of Wonder, as no Man ever did, and such Words of eternal Life, as no Man ever spoke; and therefore we find our Saviour appealing to them for the Proof of his Messiahship, saying, *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the Works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.* John 10. 37, 38. This for the Miracle.

But what was the Effect of it? or what Influence had it upon those that saw it? Why, that the

Last words of the Gospel will inform us; *When the Multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such Power unto Men.* Admiration and Adoration were the general and usual Effects and Consequents of all his mighty Works, which carry'd such apparent Marks and Signatures of a Divine Hand, as could not but astonish, and make them stand amaz'd at the sight of them. *They marvelled*, that is, they were seiz'd with Wonder, and struck with Admiration at the Greatness of them, and the supernatural Ways of doing them; and that put them upon *glorifying of God*, ascribing all the Efficacy and Operation of them to his Divine Hand, who alone was able to bring them to pass; adoring his Almighty and Infinite Wisdom and Goodness in making Men the Instruments of doing such mighty Works for their Conviction; for he it was that *gave such Power unto Men.* Such they yet thought Christ to be, being not fully instructed in his eternal Power and Godhead.

Thus we see the Substance of this Day's Gospel, and the Miracle related in it, which is every way worthy of our most serious Thoughts and Meditations. And from the whole we may learn the following Lessons:

(1.) From Christ's passing over the Sea, and going from place to place, we learn his unweary'd Diligence in doing Good, for that was the End and Design of all his Motions: His whole Life was spent in the Service of Mankind, and promoting their Welfare; he did it not by the by, or now and then upon great Occasions, but 'twas the whole Employment

ployment of his Life; his Meat, and Drink, and Recreation too was to be doing Good: His Practice herein is an excellent Pattern for all his Followers, who are to imitate him herein as far as they can, and to omit no Opportunities of serving one another, according to their several Abilities and Capacities. But this hath been elsewhere press'd and recommended more at large.

(2.) From what hath been said, we may observe our Saviour's great Kindness to this poor Paralytick, in healing the Maladies both of Body and Soul together; for he at once remov'd his Palsy for the Health of his Body, and pronounc'd his Pardon for the Welfare of his Soul, and by both bless'd him with a perfect and compleat Cure of all his Infirmities: he did not things by halves, nor made any empty and insignificant Offers of Kindness, but ever did more than he seem'd to promise or pretend to, yea more than any could ask or think; which is a farther Instance of his inexpressible Love to Mankind, and ought to be both admir'd and imitated by us as well as we may.

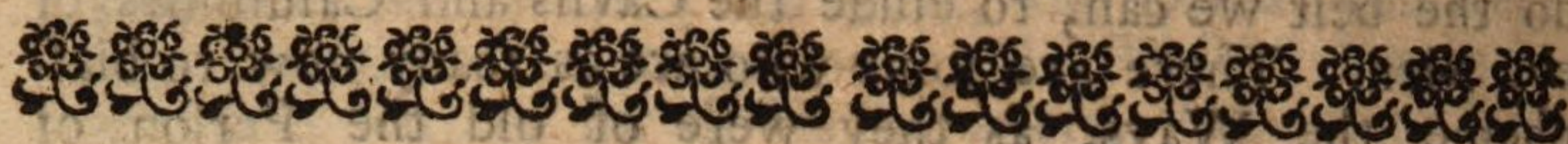
(3.) From the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* carping at our Saviour, and charging him with Blasphemy for forgiving the Sins of this poor Paralytick, we learn the Proneness of evil Men to defame the best Persons, and find fault with the best Actions; and if they dealt so with Christ himself, his Disciples may not expect better Dealing from them. The Disciple is not above his Lord; and if our Master met with evil Treatment from the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, we may learn to bear with the same Usage from the like Persons: daily Experience shews us how apt ill-minded Men are to accuse and traduce such as are every way better than themselves, and to spy a Mote in their Brother's Eye, when they cannot see a Beam in their own; we find what perverse Comments and Constructions they make of the most innocent and well-meaning Actions, and how greedily they seek occasions of Trouble and Disturbance. We observ'd this in many other Instances of the *Pharisees*, and we may easily observe the same in too many of their Followers.

(4.) From our Saviour's working a Miracle to take off the Charge of Blasphemy, and exerting his Divine Power to silence his Enemies, we may learn to use all possible Means, and particularly by *well-doing* (as the Apostle directs) *to put to silence the Ignorance of foolish Men*. St. Paul's Advice is, *Let not your Good be evil spoken of*: Now though this be not always in our power to prevent, yet we are to do

do the best we can, to elude the Cavils and Calumnies of evil Men. There are some who are as ready now to blaspheme the Ways, as they were of old the Person of Christ: and as to these, our Endeavour should be to put a Muzzle upon their Mouths, as we do upon some Creatures, who are too apt both to bark and bite; that is, to cut off all occasion from them that seek occasion, that they may be either afraid or asham'd to speak evil of us.

Lastly, From the People's glorifying and blessing God upon this Miracle of healing a sick Man, let us learn to give God the Glory of all his Mercies, and to ascribe the Honour due to his Name; particularly, as we are taught by the Gospel for this Day, let us praise God as for the Life and Doctrine, so for the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour, which gave the highest Honour and Confirmation to both. Let us frequently meditate on the Number and Greatness of them, the better to raise our Minds to a higher Esteem and Thankfulness for them; that will mightily conduce to the confirming of us in the Belief of his Doctrine, and to the building of us up more firmly in our most Holy Faith, and that will bring us at last to the end of our Faith, even the Salvation of our Soul: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE L.

The EPISTLE for the Twentieth Sunday after
Trinity.

Ephes. v. 15 — 21.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as Wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil: Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is, &c.

WE are taught in the Collect for this Day to pray, that we may be kept from all things that may hurt us, that so being ready both in Body and Soul, we may chearfully accomplish those things that God would have done, &c. Which things requiring no small Care and Diligence to accomplish them,

The Epistle for the Day begins with an Exhortation to a wise, wary and circumspect Walking, to prevent the Evils that may otherwise befall us. The Apostle, in the foregoing part of the Chapter, had minded the *Ephesians* of the happy Change wrought in them by their embracing the Gospel, how they were translated from *Darkness to Light*, and from the Power of Satan unto God, and therefore willed them to *walk as Children of Light*; ver. 8. And because of the many Dangers, Difficulties and Discouragements they might meet with in the way, he would have them to look warily about them: *See then that ye walk circumspectly, &c.* Where we have,

First, A Caution to look to our Ways, and walk circumspectly; which being usher'd in with a Note of Attention, *See then*, shews it to be a Matter necessary to be observ'd, and dangerous to be omitted.

Secondly, We have a Pattern or Direction to walk by, express'd both negatively and positively; *Not as Fools, but as Wise.*

Thirdly,

Thirdly, We have a Way or Means prescrib'd for our circumspect Walking; and that is by *redeeming the Time*.

Fourthly, A strong Argument or Motive to persuade thereunto; and that is, *Because the Days are evil*. These things, with the good Use and Improvement to be made of them, contain the whole of this Day's Epistle.

First, I begin then with the Caution here given to all Christians, *See then that ye walk circumspectly*; in the Original it is, *See how circumspectly ye can walk*: Where a Christian's Life is describ'd by Walking, which we know is a progressive Motion, and implies a continual going forward; 'tis oppos'd to sitting still, or indulging to Ease and Idleness, and so gives us to understand, that Christianity is no idle, lazy or sluggish thing, but consists in Action, and is still moving us forward in the Ways of Holiness and Vertue. Hence we find it set forth in Scripture by such Expressions as imply Activity and Motion: 'tis sometimes call'd a *seeking or searching after God*, which imports Sollicitousness and Intention; sometimes a *pressing forward towards the Mark*, which betokens Labour and Difficulty, and engages the whole Man; sometimes again 'tis express'd by a *Race*, which bespeaks the swiftest Motion, and requires us not only to walk, but to run the Paths of God's Commandments; lastly, to mention no more, 'tis often compar'd to a *Warfare*, which we know calls for our main Strength, and excites the greatest Diligence: all which and other like Expressions shew Religion to be no lazy, but an active and busy thing, that finds Employment for all our Faculties, and puts us upon the continual Exercise of Vertue and good Works. This is imply'd here in the word *Walking*, so often us'd in Scripture to express our Christian Course.

But how are we here directed to walk? Why, that the next word tells us, *See that ye walk circumspectly*: The word in the Original is *ἀνεγκλῶς*, which signifies an exact, regular and accurate Walking, or a keeping close to the Rule, without transgressing or swerving from it, either by omitting what it requires, or committing what it forbids. Now here great Care and Circumspection is necessary,

1st, To find out the right Way in which we are to walk.

2dly, To walk warily, prudently and inoffensively in it.

And,

3dly, To persevere and keep in it to the very last.

1st, I say, Circumspection is necessary in seeking and finding out the right Way in which we are to walk; for there are many By-paths of Error and Delusion, in which we may lose our way and our selves too without a great deal of Care and Diligence. Satan is very busy to blind and mislead us; the World hath many Snares and Temptations to draw us into *the broad Way that leads to Destruction*; there are many false Prophets and Teachers gone abroad into the World, who, under a show of Strictness, would entice us into Looseness and Libertinism; and our own corrupt and deceitful Hearts are too apt to close in and join with these Decievers: and therefore no small Care and Diligence is requisite to find out *the straight Gate*, and to walk in *the narrow Way that leads to Life*, since our Saviour tells us, *that few there be that find it*. He that loseth his Way will never come to his Journey's end, unless he leave the wrong, and get into the right Path that leads to it. But Errors in Religion are of all others the most fatal and dangerous, for they oftentimes endanger the Loss both of Body and Soul; which should teach us to use our utmost Care to know the Truth, and to steer our Course aright: and this will be no very difficult Task to an honest and well-meaning Enquirer, for God hath made the Way of our Duty plain before us; *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good, and what the Lord thy God requires of thee; namely, to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God: Mic. 6. 8.* Indeed the Ways of Sin and Error are full of Windings and Turnings, and a corrupt Heart, or a false Guide, may easily mislead us; here then are we to use our Care and Circumspection, to know our Duty, and to guide our Feet into the Ways of Truth and Peace: To which end we are to read and search the Scriptures, which are the best Rule to direct us; and *having a sure Word of Prophecy, we shall do well to take heed, as to a Light shining in a dark Place*. When we have by this means sought and found out the right Way,

2^{dly}, Our next Care and Circumspection must be to walk warily and circumspectly in it; and this we should the rather do, because of the many Dangers and Temptations, which even the best of Men are expos'd to. He that walks in the midst of Snares had need look well to his going, lest he be entrap'd by them; we must be great Strangers to the World, if we observe not the Artifices of Seducers to draw Men into Errors in Religion, and likewise the Temp-
tations

tations of evil Company, to entice them into a Corruption of Manners: These are two dangerous Rocks, to be avoided by all that wish well to their own Souls; and he that will sail safely between them, must carefully look about him, that he split not on either. This the Apostle here intimates to be the Case of these *Ephesians*; they had embrac'd Christianity, and so were in the right Way to Salvation, but they had many Enemies, that sought to corrupt their Faith, or debauch their Manners, and so were in danger of being lost in the crooked Paths of Sin and Error; and therefore he lets them know, that all their Care and Watchfulness is little enough to provide against them: which is the same Advice with that of our Saviour, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into Temptation.* Mat. 26. 41.

3dly, To walk circumspectly is to take care to keep in the right Way, and to persevere in it to the end, not to remit our Diligence, nor grow weary of well-doing; We must not suffer either the Allurements or Discouragements of the World to turn us out of the Way, either to the right Hand, or to the left, but must keep steadily on without Fickleness or Fainting. 'Tis not enough to begin or set out at first, but we must hold on, and continue to the last, if we mean to win the Prize. *We shall reap* (saith the Apostle) *if we faint not, and if we are faithful unto death, we shall receive a Crown of Life*; but if we faint and tire, or lose our way, we shall in the end reap nothing but Shame and Confusion.

In short, to walk circumspectly is to look every way about us, that we be not annoy'd on any side, nor at any time tread awry; 'tis to look upward by hearty and fervent Prayer, and downward by a diligent heeding our Steps: 'tis to look forward by Prudence and Foresight to what is to come, and backward by serious Reflection and Consideration of what is past; to look inward, by watching our Hearts, and keeping a Guard over our Thoughts; and outward, by a due regard to our Words and Actions: and lastly, 'tis to look round about us, to prevent Surprise, and to avoid all Assaults. This is the Duty here requir'd.

Secondly, But what is the Pattern or Precedent here prescrib'd? Why that is, *Not as Fools, but as Wise.* There are some that wholly neglect their Watch, casting off all Care and Circumspection in their Ways, and letting them-

selves loose to all manner of Sin and Wickedness, whereby they run themselves into many unnecessary Troubles and Dangers: these act like Fools, and we are caution'd here not to follow or act like them. There are others that look carefully about them, weighing the Nature and Tendency of their Actions, and using their best Endeavours to prevent Temptations, or provide against them, whereby they escape many Evils that would otherwise befall them: these act like wise Men, and such as these are here propounded to our Imitation, and are worthy to be follow'd. And from hence we learn,

1st, That a careless and dissolute Life is the greatest Folly, and they who cast off all due Care of their Ways, act like Fools; which is so plain, that *Solomon* scarce ever gives them any other Name: *Fools* (saith he) *make a mock of Sin*; and *Fools despise Wisdom*. This he makes the proper Stile and Character of all heedless and impenitent Sinners, and justly too, for they run headlong upon the greatest Dangers without any Sense or Consideration, and likewise prefer Trifles and Vanity before things of infinitely greater moment and concernment to them, which are known Acts and Instances of Folly. Again,

2^{dly}, We learn hence, that a holy and circumspect Walking is the truest Wisdom, and they that narrowly observe and take heed to their Ways, act like wise Men: This *Solomon* likewise often tells us, for he makes the Fear of God the beginning of Wisdom; and the having it always before our Eyes, the Progress, the End, and the Completion of it: This preserves from many unnecessary Troubles here, and from eternal Misery hereafter; which are high Acts and Instances of Wisdom.

In short, the Wisdom or Folly of any is in nothing better seen, than in their Care and Choice of things: He that propounds to himself a good End, and pursues it by proper and suitable Means, is by all Men justly thought to act wisely; whereas he that either propounds to himself no End at all, or a very bad one, and hath no regard to the Honesty or Injustice of the Means by which he follows it, must be own'd by all to act very foolishly. Now this is what the Apostle here seeks to convince Sinners of, that to live heedlessly and incautiously, without a due sense of the Good or Evil of our Ways, is to be guilty of great Folly; but to walk warily and circumspectly, is to walk *not as Fools, but as Wise*.

But,

But, *Thirdly*, how may this be done? Why, the next words direct us to one good Way or Means tending thereunto; and that is, the *redeeming of Time*. Now the redeeming of Time cannot be meant of the recalling or regaining that Time that is already past and gone, for that is impossible; but of the improving what remains to better advantage, and repairing that which we have lost, by a double Diligence in that which is to come: and there can be no better help to a wary and circumspect walking, than by making a good use of those precious Hours and Opportunities, which if lost or let slip, are never to be recover'd. There are few or none have been so good Husbands of their Time, as not to mispend a great part of it. The doing nothing, and the doing of what is as good or rather worse than nothing, have taken up no small part of our days. Idleness, bad Company, vain Thoughts, Words and Actions, have consum'd many of our precious Minutes: Now to redeem this Time, is not by feeding our selves with vain Hopes of living it over again to spend it better, for that was never granted to any, but by being truly sensible and sorry for what is lost, and making a better use of what is left. The more we have mispent, the more should we bestir our selves to redeem and repair it; the longer and farther we have been out of the way, the sooner should we return, and mend our pace after. The Time and Substance that have been squander'd away in Gaming, Folly, and Extravagance, must be repair'd by Acts of Piety, Devotion and Charity; and the unnecessary Visits and Vanities of the World be turn'd into the holy Exercises of Religion and Vertue. *The time past should suffice* (saith the Apostle) *to have served divers Lusts, and to walk according to the Course of the World*; the rest of our days should be devoted to the Service of God, and the Salvation of our Souls: and that will keep a watchful eye over our Ways, and restrain all our Wanderings.

But the redeeming the Time here is by some thought to be what we call gaining of Time, to save our selves from any Evil or Danger that threatens: And this seems to be countenanc'd by

The Reason or Motive added in the next words, *Because the Days are evil*: intimating, that we should by Delays and all other prudent and lawful means endeavour to escape

those Evils, which a wicked World would bring upon us. Now the Days may be said to be evil, in respect of the Evil of Sin, and the Evil of Suffering: upon both which accounts, the Days in which the Apostle wrote this Epistle might be justly reckon'd so; for there were some who sought to corrupt the Faith and Manners of these *Ephesians*, and there were others who rais'd Persecutions against the Orthodox Christians, and both of them concur'd to make the Days evil and troublesom: for which reason he wills them to walk circumspectly, to look well to their ways, and to use the Wisdom of the Serpent, as well as the Innocence of the Dove, to avoid the Dangers and Difficulties that surrounded them. Neither are the Days in which we live less evil and perillous; for we have too many who seek to seduce the People into Errors and Divisions, and we have others that threaten the Peace and Welfare of Church and State: so that we too have great need to use our utmost Care and Diligence, to be preserv'd from the Traps and Trials of an evil World, and to be kept holy and blameless to the Coming of our Lord Jesus.

From whence the Apostle infers, in the next words, *Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is*: that is, be wary and cautious in all your Behaviour, not running into needless Dangers, nor declining necessary ones, but labouring to know what the Lord would have you both to do and suffer, chusing still to keep a good Conscience, and rather to suffer than to sin against it. To which end,

He farther exhorts to avoid all carnal and brutish Sensualities, those especially that were used in the Heathen Bacchanals, to which the following words relate: *And be not drunk with Wine, wherein is Excess, but be filled with the Spirit*: that is, give no offence by any Intemperance or Excess, which will betray both your Reason and Religion; nor let your Hearts be at any time overcharg'd with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, as the manner of the Heathen is, even in their religious Joy: but let your Hearts be replenish'd with the Graces and Comforts of God's Holy Spirit, that your Mirth and Joy may be always spiritual; *Speaking to your selves in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing and making melody in your Hearts to the Lord. If any be merry* (saith St. James) *let him sing Psalms*; let him express his Mirth not in drunken Catches, but in pious Hymns, which at once edify and delight: and therefore

our

our Apostle would have us *teach and admonish one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing with Grace in our Hearts to the Lord*; Col. 3. 16. This is to begin the Work of Heaven here upon Earth, to join with the holy Angels above, and by sounding forth the Praises of our Maker, to prepare our selves for the Heavenly Choir. And indeed nothing tends more to elevate our Minds, to raise our Affections above this World, and to give us some Foretastes of Heaven, than a frequent Exercise and Delight in this Duty. To which the Apostle adds,

The great Duty of Thanksgiving, in the next words; *Giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Where the Vertue of Thankfulness is made to extend to all times, and to all things. Adversity, as well as Prosperity, hath its Blessings and good Ends, and therefore both are to be thank'd for; In every thing give thanks, for they are all thankworthy. The Object is God the Father, from whom all good things come; but through the name and for the sake of God the Son, by whose Merits and Mediation they are deriv'd to us: to whom therefore we are in Duty bound to give continual thanks, which is an Act of Justice as well as Religion, and is attended with present Pleasure, and an ample future Reward.

Lastly, To promote this Care and Circumspection of our Ways, we are exhorted to the great Duty of Submission, in the last words; *Submitting your selves one to another in the Fear of God.* Which implies not only Submission to Superiors, who have the Authority over us, and a Power to command us in all lawful things; but to Equals and Inferiours, to whom we owe all the good Offices of Kindness and Charity, complying with their Infirmities, and yielding to all their reasonable Desires and Necessities, and performing all the Duties that appertain to the several Conditions and Orders of Men.

This is the Sum of the Epistle for this Day; from which we may learn to set a strict guard upon our Ways, and to consider the Nature and Lawfulness of all our Actions and Designs, before we set about them: let us do nothing rashly, nor carelessly run into Temptation, but do our best to avoid them, and to abstain from all Occasions and Appearances of Evil. To which end,

Let

Let us often think of the End of our Christian Course, and have an eye to the Prize of our high Calling in Christ Jesus, that we may run with patience the Race that is set before us.

Finally, to conclude all, let us implore the Aid and Assistance of Heaven, to be directed and kept in the way that leads to it; often praying with the Psalmist, *Shew me thy way, O Lord, and teach me thy Paths; guide me in the way that I should go, and let me not wander from thy Commandments.* And thus by walking circumspectly in the Ways of Holiness here, we shall e'er long arrive at the Regions of Bliss and Happiness hereafter: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LI.

The GOSPEL for the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

Matthew xxii. 1—14.

Jesus said, The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King who made a Marriage for his Son, and sent forth his Servants to call them that were bidden to the Wedding: and they would not come, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day contains a Parable, in which, under the Resemblance of a King's making a Marriage for his Son, and inviting many to it, is set forth the free and gracious Offer of the Gospel, together with the invaluable Blessings and Privileges of it: which Offer was first made to the Jewish Church and Nation, and upon their refusal 'twas made to the Gentiles, and in them to all Nations; adding withal, a severe Sentence upon those that rejected this Tender, or receiv'd it not as they should. All which things being here figuratively express'd, will require a little unfolding.

The Parable begins thus; *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King, who made a Marriage for his Son.*
Where,

Gospel for the 20th Sunday after Trinity. 427

Where, by the *Kingdom of Heaven* is meant the Christian Church, or the State of the Gospel, for which 'tis often taken in the New Testament. The King here meant, is God the Father, the great Sovereign of the World, and the sole Maker and Disposer of all things. His Son is Jesus Christ, begotten of the Father before all Worlds. The Marriage here made was God the Father's giving his Son for the Salvation of Mankind; according to that of *St. John*, *God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son.* To which the Son also gave his Consent and Compliance; for he is said so to *love the World, as to give himself to and for it.* This is here set forth by a *Marriage*, to shew the Nearness of Affection, and the Dearness of the Relation between them. Hence we find Christ often owning himself related to his Church, as a Husband to his Spouse, as you may see throughout the Book of *Canticles*; and God himself is said to be marry'd to his People, *Jer. 3. 14. Turn ye back-sliding Children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you.*

This is the Marriage here said to be made, in which Christ gives himself to his Church, and the Church gives it self back again unto Christ, and so by nuptial and mutual Endearments they become nearly join'd and united to each other. *St. Luke*, in relating this Parable, tells us, that this Marriage was celebrated with a Feast or Wedding-Supper, *Luke 14.* And the same is imply'd here in *St. Matthew*; for the making a Marriage, is often render'd by making a Marriage-Feast for his Son. Now by this Feast here we are to understand the spiritual Food of God's holy Word and Sacraments, the proper Food and Nourishment of the Soul, and the fittest Banquet for such a Solemnity: 'tis express'd sometimes by a *Feast of fat things*, and sometimes by *Marrow and Fatness*, the highest and best of all Feeding. *St. John* for its Excellency calls it *Meat indeed*, and *Drink indeed*; as also the *living Bread*, or the *Bread of Life*, that came down from Heaven: shewing how vastly it exceeds *Moses's* Manna in the Wilderness, and all earthly Dainties; for none of these could preserve any from Death, whereas this heavenly Food not only does that, but cherisheth the Soul to eternal Life.

To this divine Gospel-Feast, we read in the next Verse of a gracious and generous Invitation: for the King sent forth his Servants, to call them that were bidden to the Wedding. Where by the Servants that were sent forth, we are to understand the Ministers of Christ, and the Stewards of the

the Myſteries of God : of whom Chriſt himſelf declares, *As my Father ſent me, ſo ſend I you.* They are commiſſion'd by him, and ſent as his Servants ; to whom he added this Encouragement, *He that beareth you, beareth me ; and he that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me ; and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me.*

But what was the Errand upon which he ſent his Miniſters and Ambaſſadors ? Why, 'twas *to call them that were bidden to the Wedding ;* to invite them to come away to this great and glorious Banquet, *i. e.* to the Participation of God's Holy Word and Sacraments ; to accept of the Offers of Mercy, and the Tenders of Salvation made to them in the Goſpel ; and to that end, to call upon them to hear the Words of eternal Life, and to receive that immortal Food, that is able to ſave their Souls. This is the Meſſage they were ſent to deliver.

But what Succeſs had theſe Meſſengers, or what Answer was return'd to him that ſent them ? Why, a very rude and ungrateful one indeed ; *They would not come.* Who could have thought, that any ſhould be ſo unthankful, as to reſuſe ſo kind an Invitation ? or that ſo much Love ſhould meet with ſuch Ingratitude ? But ſo it was then, and ſo it is in a great meaſure to this day.

St. Luke makes their Answer a little more civil, tho' twas in effect the ſame ; for he tells us, *They all with one Conſent began to make Excuses : One had bought a piece of Ground, and muſt needs go and ſee it, and ſo pray'd to be excus'd : Another had bought five Yoke of Oxen, and was going to prove them, and for that reaſon pray'd to be excus'd : Another had marry'd a Wife, and he could not come.* All which frivolous Excuses betray'd not only a Coldneſs, but a Contempt of the Invitation. The Deſign of all this is, to reſent the great Obſtinacy and Perverſeneſs of the Jews, in rejecting the Doctrine of Chriſt, in deſpiſing his Miracles, and reſuſing all Overtures of Grace and Mercy that could be made to them.

But how did the King reſent theſe Sights and Indignities offer'd to him ? Why, he was not preſently mov'd to Indignation, but bore with them a while, and was willing to try them again ; for the next words tell us, that he ſent forth other Servants, ſaying, *tell them who are bidden, Behold, I have prepar'd my Dinner, my Oxen and Fatlings are kill'd, and all things are ready, come unto the Marriage.* He chang'd his Meſſengers, leſt they ſhould have any Prejudices againſt the

the former, and sent other Ambassadors to treat with them, letting them know, that their Master had prepar'd an Entertainment for them, and that all things were ready for their Reception, and that nothing was wanting but the Guests to sit down and partake of it: which is in effect the same that St. Paul told the *Corinthians*, *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, come therefore and keep the Feast.*

But how was this second Message receiv'd? Why, much like the former; for *they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his Farm, and another to his Merchandize.* Their worldly Business engross'd all their Time and Thoughts, and they had none of them to spare upon other, tho' more heavenly matters: their Minds were set upon earthly Profits and Preferments, and look'd chiefly how they might prosper and be promoted in this World, and therefore cared not for a Messiah, who only talk'd of advancing them in another. Yea, there was a worse matter in it than this, for they handled these other Servants worse than the first; so the following words tell us, *The Remnant took his Servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.* One would think, if they would not come to the Feast, they might have had so much Manners as to have return'd thanks for the Invitation, and to treat the Messengers civilly, who came upon so kind an Errand. But instead of that, they abus'd and persecuted them; yea, they used them barbarously and kill'd them. This Passage relates to the Jews barbarous Usage of the Prophets and Apostles that were sent unto them, of which our Saviour most pathetically reminds them, *Mat. 23. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gather'd thy Children together, as a Hen gathers her Chicken under her wings, and ye would not?* Where we see how tenderly Christ resented their wicked and inhuman Carriage towards his Servants, as he still does all ill Treatment of his Ministers.

But how did the King take these repeated Refusals of his Offers, and the cruel Usage of his Messengers? Why that the next words declare; *When the King heard thereof, he was wroth, and sent forth his Armies, and destroy'd those Murderers, and burnt up their City.* Their stubborn and incorrigible Ingratitude kindled his Wrath against them, and when the Ministers he sent to them could not prevail to win them, he sent forth his Armies to destroy them, and to burn their City. The Armies he sent forth were
the

430 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

the *Romans*, who were the Executioners of God's Vengeance upon them; for they destroy'd the Murderers that slew his Servants, sack'd *Jerusalem*, and laid both the Temple and City in ashes. *Behold* (saith our Saviour) *your House is left unto you desolate*, and all things are fallen to utter ruin. Which made him, when he drew near the City, weep over it, saying, *O that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy Peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

This is the First Part of this Parable, which contains the many gracious Offers of Mercy and Pardon made to God's own People the Jews, together with their wilful Refusal of them all, and God's utter Rejection of them for their obstinate Infidelity and Unbelief.

The Second Part of it refers to God's calling in of the Gentiles, and taking them within the Pale of his Church, who were before Aliens and Strangers. And that begins in the next Verse: *Then saith he to his Servants, the Wedding is ready, but they who were bidden were not worthy; go ye therefore into the High-ways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the Marriage:* meaning, that tho' all things are prepar'd for this Wedding or Gospel-Feast, yet the principal Guests that were invited, are not prepar'd for it; and having by their wilful Contempt shew'd themselves unworthy of it, they shall be waited for no longer. Go ye therefore into the Highways, where the Heathens and Gentiles walk; and how vile soever they may seem in your eyes, bring them in to the Feast. St. Luke expresses it thus; *Go ye quickly into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and bring in hither the Poor and the Maim'd, the Halt and the Blind.* All that you meet with, whether Poor or Rich, Gentle or Simple, preach the Gospel to them, and invite them to the Feast. Here is God Almighty's free and general Invitation to all People and Nations, to come in and accept of the Grace and Favour of the Gospel: *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters, come buy and eat; yea, come buy Wine and Milk without Money and without Price.* The Apostles Commission was, *Go and preach to all Nations, make Disciples of them, and bring them to me.* Which Commission they executed, as the next words tell us: *So those Servants went out into the Highways, and gather'd together all as many as they found, both bad and good; and the Wedding was furnish'd with Guests.* This was the calling in
of

Gospel for the 20th Sunday after Trinity. 431

of the Gentiles to be Fellow-Heirs and Partakers of the manifold Grace of God. Before, *In Jewry only was God known, and his Name was great in Israel. At Salem was his Tabernacle, and his Dwelling in Zion: he had not dealt so with other Nations, neither had the Heathens the knowledg of his Law.* The Gentiles were excluded by a *Partition-Wall* from the Privileges of the Temple, and were so many Outcasts and Strangers from the *Covenant of Promise*; but here this Enclosure was broken down, and both Jew and Gentile became *all one in Christ Jesus.*

The Church now receives all both bad and good, base and honourable, Hypocrites as well as sincere Christians. But yet Christ knows the one from the other, and will make a distinction between them. For it follows in the next Verse, that *when the King came in to see the Guests, he saw there a Man, which had not on a Wedding-Garment:* that is, he found there one, that came not so well dress'd and prepar'd as he should be, to the sacred Solemnity of such a Feast. Here by a *Wedding-Garment* we are not to understand any outward Attire, Vestment, or Habit of the Body; for Christ looks not much to that, tho too many else do: but the *Wedding-Garment* here refers to the inward Dress and Ornaments of the Soul. The Person here spoken of, had not his Mind furnish'd with Knowledg, to discern the Lord's Body; nor his Heart with Grace, spiritually to feed upon it: his Soul was not so cloth'd with Humility, as to be sensible of his Sins, or sorry for them: he had not on the Robes of any real Righteousness, either inherent or imputed: he came not to this holy Table as he ought, with the Garments of Praise and Thanksgiving for the Mercies promis'd and convey'd by it. This undress'd or unprepar'd Person fell under the sharp Rebuke of the Master of the Feast; who said unto him, *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding-Garment? and he was speechless.*

The Entertainer found one of the newly-receiv'd Gentiles crouding into the Feast in his heathenish Vices and Practices, without putting off the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, or putting on the new Man, which is renew'd in Righteousness and true Holiness; and having found him, he expostulates the matter with him, how he durst venture upon so holy a Feast in so unworthy and unholy a manner: and being press'd home with it, he was struck dumb, and had nothing to say in answer

answer or excuse for his Rudeness. And therefore his doom was pronounc'd in the next words, *Then said the King to the Servants, Bind him Hand and Foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer Darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.* This will be the sad Doom of all unworthy Receivers of God's Holy Word and Sacraments, they will be for ever depriv'd of the Light and Comfort of both, and be sentenc'd to outer and eternal Darkness: so that 'tis not all who come to this Feast, that will find a Welcome; for as the Jews were rejected and punish'd with utter Ex-cision, for not coming to it at all, so the intruding Gentile was rebuk'd and punish'd with Damnation for coming to it unworthily.

To all which 'tis added in the Close, that *many are call'd, but few are chosen*: that is, many are call'd to the external Privileges of the Gospel, that are not inwardly and effectually call'd or converted by them; which makes the number of those small, who are the chosen Vessels fitted for Glory, and seal'd by the Holy Spirit to eternal Life.

Thus we see the Sense and Scope of this Parable, appointed to be read as the Gospel for this Day; from which we may infer many useful and profitable Lessons. As,

1. From the free general Invitation to this Gospel Feast, we learn the transcendent Love of God to Mankind, in making such ample and excellent Provision for them, and then courting them to accept it. He gave us his Son to espouse our Cause, and to be in a manner contracted and married to us; who furnish'd a Table, to keep a Fellowship and Correspondence with us, loving us to the very Death, and instituting a Feast in remembrance of it: to which he is pleas'd to invite all Men without exception, sending his Servants or Ministers to call and compel them to come in to taste and see that the Lord is gracious. And what unparallel'd Instances of Love are these? *God so loved the World* (saith St. John) *that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* And elsewhere, *Behold! what manner of Love is this, wherewith the Father hath loved us?* St. Paul like one in a Rapture at the Thoughts of it, cries out, *Oh the Height and Depth, and Breadth and Length of the Love of God, that passeth Knowledge!* Which should teach us not only to admire, but readily to accept, and answer the Design of it.

2. From

2. From God's renewing his Invitation to the Jews, upon their first Refusal, and sending other Servants to call and woo them to the Wedding; we learn not only the great Love, but the great Patience and Long-suffering of God towards them. Like an importunate Lover, he gave not out upon the first Denial, but renew'd his Suit, and sent other Ambassadors to beseech them to be reconcil'd and come. He did not punish the Contempt of his Grace and his Word presently, but expected to see whether they would repent and comply: which shews his infinite Tenderness and Forbearance.

3. From their standing out and refusing all these Calls and Obligations; we learn their prodigious Obstinacy and Ingratitude, that nothing could prevail or work upon them: Neither the tenderest Bowels, nor the most importunate Entreaties, nor the largest Offers of Mercy or Kindness could win them to any Compliance. And there are but too many such Monsters still, who can resist all these Charms, and turn a deaf Ear to all the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel.

4. We learn hence, the Justice of God in punishing these Jews with utter Rejection, for their incorrigible Obstinacy and Disobedience. When Men have fill'd up the Measure of their Iniquities, and become so obdurate and harden'd in them, that nothing can reclaim or amend them; then do they become ripe for Destruction, and leave themselves without Excuse or Remedy. This was the Case of the Jews, and will be the sad Fate of all stubborn and impenitent Sinners.

5. From the Excuses made in the Parable for not coming to the Marriage-feast, we learn that Earthly-mindedness and an inordinate Love of this World, is the main Hindrance from the Pursuit of better and more heavenly Matters; for all their Excuses were taken from thence: one went to his Farm, and another to his Merchandize; one had a Piece of Ground to see, another a Yoke of Oxen to try, and another was kept from coming by his Wife: and all these made light of Christ, by hearkening to Mammon; and so prefer'd the perishing Trifles of Earth, before the everlasting Treasures of Heaven. But such Pretences cannot but appear vain and frivolous at present, and will rather aggravate than avail any thing at the last Day.

6. From the severe Punishment inflicted on the Jews, for not coming to this Wedding-supper, we learn the great

Danger

Danger of absenting our selves from God's holy Word and Sacraments. They who refus'd to come to the Feast of the Passover, were to be cut off from among the People, *Exod. 12.* and they who here rejected the Dainties of the Gospel, were rejected themselves, and utterly cast off for ever. Which should make us afraid of wilfully abstaining from the Lord's Table, or refusing the Bread of Life, that is there tender'd to us.

7. From the dreadful Sentence pronounc'd against him, who came to this Feast without a Wedding-Garment, we may learn the extreme Danger, as of not coming at all, so of coming to it unworthily. The Danger is exceeding great on both sides: for he that cometh not at all, starves his Soul, by withholding from it its proper Food; and he that cometh unworthily, poisons his Soul, by corrupting this sacred Nourishment: Death and Damnation will be the certain End and Issue of both. To prevent which sad Events, let us take care to prepare our selves beforehand, by Faith and Repentance; and then reverently approach this Holy Table with a sacred Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, and then we may be sure to be fill'd. Let us put on our Wedding-Garment, which consists not in the Finery of outward Attire, of which many are careful enough, but in the inward Ornaments of a meek, humble, and quiet Spirit, which are in the sight of God of great Price.

Lastly, From the concluding Words of the Parable, *Many are call'd, but few are chosen*, let us learn not to depend wholly upon the outward Call to the Privileges of the Gospel, but labour to be inwardly call'd by the renewing of our Minds, that we may be found in the number of those that are chosen to eternal Life.





DISCOURSE LII.

The EPISTLE for the One and Twentieth
Sunday after Trinity.

Ephes. vi. 10——21.

My Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might; put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil: for we wrestle not against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities and Powers, &c.

THE Petitions we offer up in the Collect for this Day, are for Pardon and Peace; that being cleans'd from all our Sins, we may serve God with a quiet Mind. To obtain which,

The Epistle for the Day begins with an Exhortation *to be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*: that is, to be confirm'd in the Faith of Christ, to be fortify'd with Grace and spiritual Strength from him, and to labour for such a Firmness and Constancy of Mind, as may carry us above and beyond all Temptations.

To which end, the next Words exhort us, *to put on the whole Armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil*; that is, to make use of all Defensatives and Weapons that Christ hath furnish'd us with, to repel the Stratagems and Devices of Satan: and that because, *We wrestle not against Flesh and Blood*, i. e. against human and ordinary Enemies, *but against Principalities and Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against spiritual Wickednesses in high Places*; that is, against the several Ranks of evil Spirits, that hover in the Air, and haunt the Earth; against the God of this World, who seeks to blind the Minds of them that believe not, and against the dangerous Sins of Pride, Envy, and Malice, which seat

themselves on high. And because this Combat is attended with many and great Difficulties from the Power and Subtlety of the Adversaries, the same Advice is renew'd in the next words; *Wherefore take unto you the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil Day, and having done all, to stand.* What this Armour of God is, we shall see by and by; the Use whereof is, to withstand all Temptations in the evil Day of Persecution, Affliction or any other Trial, that we may be exercis'd withal: and having done our utmost, to stand, which you know is the Posture of Conquerors, who are wont to stand and keep their ground, when the Vanquish'd run away, or fall before them. Accordingly the General or Captain of our Salvation once more commands all his Followers to stand, *Stand therefore;* which is elsewhere express'd, by *quitting your selves like Men, and enduring Hardship as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ.* And this gives us to understand, that a Christian Life is a spiritual Warfare; we enter upon it in our Baptism, at which time we lift our selves under Christ's Banner, and solemnly engage to be his faithful Soldiers and Servants to our Lives-end. The Enemies we engage against, are the Enemies of Christ and our own Salvation; viz. the Devil, the World, and the Flesh: against all which we are enter'd into a Holy War, and bid an open defiance to them at our Entrance upon Christianity.

The Devil, with his accursed Crew of evil Spirits, having revolted from their Maker, are still seeking to draw us into the same Conspiracy; they tempt us to Pride, the Sin by which they fell, to bring us into the same Condemnation; they solicit us to Unbelief, Disobedience, and all other Wickedness, whom we therefore *renounce with all his Works.*

The World too sets upon us with many Charms and Temptations; it hath Smiles to allure, and Frowns to affright us from our Duty, which should make us to look about us, lest we be insnar'd or inveigled by them: and therefore St. John seeks to take off our *Love from the World, and the things of it*, that we may fix it on God; the Love of both being inconsistent with each other: 1 John 3. 16. Yea, our Saviour wills us to hate and despise the World, when it stands in competition with God, and not to suffer our selves to be led away by any of its Allurements.

The Flesh likewise is still enticing and importuning of us to Evil, and seeks many Ways to circumvent and betray

Epistle for the 21st Sunday after Trinity. 437

us. This is an Enemy in our Bosom, and so the more dangerous, because it secretly assaults us within; its Darts are invisible, and wound without being seen; it often joins Issue with Satan and the World, and too frequently yields us up into their hands: and therefore we are commanded to *mortify, resist and abstain from all fleshly Lusts, because they war against the Soul*; 1 Pet. 2. 11.

These are the Enemies that we are to encounter in this Warfare, which are all of them vigilant, subtle, fierce and formidable. The Devil, for his Rage and Diligence, is compar'd to a *roaring Lion, going up and down, seeking whom he may devour*. For his Subtlety he is call'd *the old Serpent*, that beguil'd our first Parents in Paradise, and hath been still seducing their Posterity ever since: and therefore St. Peter adviseth Christians, *to be sober and vigilant, daily watching against his Devices*, 1 Pet. 5. 8. The World is that great Sorcerer, that bewitches Mankind with its Enchantments; and therefore we are deeply concern'd to renounce all its Poms and Vanities.

Our own Hearts too are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; which we should therefore keep with all Diligence, for out of them are the Issues of Life, as the wise Man tells us, *Prov. 4. 23*. Of these Enemies we are forewarn'd, that we may be forearm'd against them; and the rather, because their Designs are cruel and mischievous: they watch for our Souls, not to save but to destroy them; they conceal their Cruelty under a Disguise of Kindness, and when they seem to please most, are most eager upon their Prey, whom we are therefore to watch and arm our selves against.

But what is the Armour we are here bid to put on to this end? or what are the Weapons to be made use of in this Warfare? Why, that is set forth to us in the following part of the Chapter, where St. Paul prescribes a *Helmet* for the Head, a *Breast-Plate* for the Belly, a *Shield* for the Back, a *Girdle* for the Loins, a *Sword* for the Hand, and *Shoes for the Feet*; thus arming Christians Cap-a-pee, and furnishing them throughout from Head to Feet. All which Terms being figurative and metaphorical, will require some Explication; for our Apostle tells us, that *the Weapons of this Warfare are not carnal, for tho we walk in the Flesh, we war not after the Flesh*. But these Weapons are spiritual, being level'd against ghostly Enemies and spiritual Wickednesses in high Places; and these are mighty thro God, to

438 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

the pulling down of these strong Holds, to the casting down Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledg of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ : 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5. If you would know what this spiritual Armour is, we have here a particular Account of each part of it. As,

1st, The first Piece of Armour we are here bid to put on, is the Girdle of Truth, in these words, *Having your Loins girt with Truth* ; ver. 14. Now this Girdle of Truth is generally expounded of the sound and saving Knowledg of heavenly Truths. St. Peter expresses it by *girding up the Loins of the Mind*, 1 Pet. 1. 13. that is, by fortifying it with Wisdom and Understanding ; that so knowing what the Will of the Lord is, and what the Devices of our Enemies are, we may the better adhere to the one, and avoid the other. By this we shall be directed in the whole Course of our Lives, and likewise instructed in the Wiles of the Devil to turn us out of it, which will help much to arm our selves against them ; nor will Satan be able to get any Advantage upon us, when *we are not ignorant of his Devices*, 2 Cor. 2. 11. And this is call'd *the Girdle of Truth*, because it fastens all Divine Truths upon the Mind ; for as the Girdle ties and keeps on the other Armour, and fits us for the use of it, so Knowledg tends to keep us in the ways of Truth, and preserves all other Vertues : and therefore we are in the first place to have the Loins of our Mind girt with Truth, and that will keep it from running into Error or Licentiousness, as a Girdle restrains and keeps in the Body.

Moreover, to have the Loins girt, in Scripture signifies Strength, Vigour, and Activity in any Undertaking : *I will strengthen him with a Girdle*, saith God, Isa. 22. 21. This was the Use of the military Belt or Girdle, to keep the Body more tight and fit for Action. And to this the Apostle here chiefly refers, in *having our Loins girt with Truth*, by keeping to sound Doctrine, in opposition to all Errors and Heresies ; which will serve as a Girdle to tie all our spiritual Armour close about us. And this is the first Piece of the Armour.

The 2^d is the Breast-Plate of Righteousness, in the next words, *having on the Breast-Plate of Righteousness* ; where the Apostle alludes to that of the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. 59. 17. where God is said to *put on Righteousness as a Breast-Plate*. By this we are to understand that Integrity of Heart,

Heart, that is to accompany the Soundness of our Mind : for 'tis not enough to have the *Light* of Divine Truths shining into our Minds, to preserve us from Error ; but we must have the *Love* of them too *shed abroad into our Hearts*, to keep us from all Unrighteousness. *Knowledg alone puffeth up*, and that will lead us into the Snare and Condemnation of the Devil, and give our Enemies great advantage over us ; but *Charity* and the Love of Vertue *edifieth*, and that will set us above the Reach and Danger of all their Assaults : for which reason we are not only to gird up our Minds with the Knowledg of the Truth, but to guard our Hearts with the Armour of Righteousness, having on the Breast-Plate of a good Conscience, which will be as a brazen Wall to repel all the Power and Force of Temptation. In short, we are to add to our Knowledg Vertue, and to have our Hearts establish'd with Grace, and that will defend us from the Danger of our Enemies, as a Breast Plate doth from the Darts of an Assailant : which is the second part of this Armour.

The 3d Piece of it is *to have our Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace*, ver. 15. where the Apostle alludes to the Custom both of the *Grecians* and *Romans*, who were wont to reckon Shoes in the account of their Armour, which were ordinarily made of Brass. In the Story of *Goliath*, we read, that he had *Greaves of Brass upon his Legs*, 1 Sam. 17. 6. And *Homer* furnishes out *Achilles* and other Warriors with Boots or Shoes of Brass or Iron on their Feet ; the use whereof was to defend their Feet against the Traps and sharp Stakes which the Enemies were wont to lay in the way to stop their March. Indeed the putting on of Shoes, in Scripture signifies a Readiness and Preparation for a Journey. Hence the *Israelites* were commanded to eat the Passover with *their Loins girt, with Shoes on their Feet, and their Staff in their Hand*, to denote their Readiness for the March, *Exod.* 12. 11. And our Saviour will'd his Disciples to be shod with Sandals to the same purpose, *Mark* 6. 9.

Now to this the Apostle here refers, in making the Gospel of Peace the best Furniture and Preparation for our Feet ; for the Peace and Love requir'd in the Gospel will best fit us for our Christian Course, 'twill make us go on more expeditely in our way, and defend us from the Dangers we may meet with in it.

4ly, Another principal Piece of this Armour, is the *Shield of Faith*, which we are therefore chiefly requir'd to put on: Ver. 16. *Above all things taking the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the Wicked.* By Faith here we are to understand a firm Persuasion of the Truth of our Religion, or a stedfast Belief of the Gospel, with all the Promises and Threats contain'd therein. This is here call'd *the Shield of Faith*, being the principal Defence of a Christian against all the fiery Darts of Satan's Temptations, and likewise the main Weapon wherewith we are to combat the World, and our own Lufts. This will defeat all the Designs of the Devil, and render us invulnerable in our Conflict with him: and St John assures us, that *this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith*; 1 John 5. 4. To this the Author to the *Hebrews* ascribes all the Victories and Triumphs of those glorious Heroes, mention'd in the 11th Chapter of that Epistle; who, by this irresistible Weapon of Faith, conquer'd the greatest Difficulties, and repel'd the Force of the strongest Temptations: *By Faith (saith he) they wrought Righteousness, obtain'd Promises, stopp'd the Mouths of Lions, quench'd the Violence of Fire, escap'd the Edg of the Sword, out of Weakness were made strong, &c.* He that truly believes the great and noble Rewards of Vertue, together with the dreadful Punishments that attend all vicious Courses, will be powerfully persuaded to follow the one, and forsake the other; no poison'd Darts can enter, no Flatteries, Fears, or Frowns can shake the Constancy of a Mind fortify'd with this Persuasion; the Shield of Faith will quench all these fiery Darts, and defend us from all Evil.

5ly, Another Piece of Armour that we are to put on, is the *Helmet of Salvation*, ver. 17. *And take the Helmet of Salvation.* Now this is interpreted by the Apostle to be the *Hope of Salvation*, 1 Theff. 5. 8. for as a Helmet preserves the Head from the Violence of a Blow, at least from being wounded or hurt by it, so Hope keeps the Soul from all real Harm, and secures it from the Danger of all Assaults. This Hope is elsewhere call'd *the Anchor of the Soul, both sure and stedfast*, Heb. 6. 19. for as an Anchor fastens a Ship, and keeps it from being toss'd and shipwreck'd by the Waves; so the Hope of Salvation fixes the Soul on God in the greatest Storms of the World, and keeps it from making shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience: it supports

Epistle for the 21st Sunday after Trinity. 441

ports it under all earthly Troubles and Persecutions, and prepares it for the endless Joys and Happiness of Heaven; for *he that hath this Hope* (saith the Apostle) *purifies himself, even as he is pure.* 1 John 3. 3.

6ly, The next Piece of the Christian Armour is *the Sword of the Spirit*, which the Apostle expounds to be *the Word of God*; ver. 17. A Sword, you know, serves both to defend and to destroy; it secures the Person, and wounds the Assailant: in like manner this Sword of the Spirit guards us from Error, and confounds all the Enemies of the Truth. Hence the Author to the *Hebrews* styles the Word of God, *A two-edged Sword, quick and powerful, dividing asunder between the Joints and the Marrow, the Soul and the Spirit, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart*; Chap. 4. 11. This Weapon our Saviour made use of in his Conflict with the Devil, baffling all his Temptations out of the Word of God, and repelling every Assault with *It is written*: And the same Weapon we are to use against all the Enemies of Truth, confuting their Errors by the Word of God, and cutting down Heresies and Divisions by this Sword of the Spirit.

Lastly, To all this the Apostle adds Prayer, to compleat the Armour, and to render it successful; ver. 18. *Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance*: 'Tis this gives the Success and Efficacy to all the rest, by calling in the Assistance of Heaven to our Succour, and fortifying our Weakness by the Auxiliaries of Divine Grace. And this he would have done, not only now and then by Fits and Starts, but *always, watching thereunto with all Perseverance*; lest by neglecting our Watch and our Prayers, the Devil take hold of the Opportunity, and get an Advantage upon us. And therefore our Saviour bids us to *watch and pray, lest ye fall into Temptation*: and this with all sorts of Prayer, viz. Petition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication in the Spirit, that we may find Grace to help in time of need. Neither are these Prayers to be confin'd to our selves, but to extend to all others, *making Supplication for all Saints*, among whom the Apostle wills these *Ephesians* to put up a Petition for him, viz. for Knowledge and Boldness in the Delivery of his Message; ver. 19. *And for me, that Utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my Mouth boldly, to make known the Mystery of the Gospel.* And the rather, because he was then an Ambassador in Bonds, for preaching the Gospel to the

the Gentiles. And that he might not be discourag'd by his Sufferings for them, he would have them to be mindful of him in their Prayers, that he might not be daunted, but *Speak boldly, as he ought to speak.*

This is briefly the Sum of the Epistle for this Day, which contains the Armour that Christians are to be furnish'd withal in their spiritual Warfare with ghostly Enemies. All that remains, is to exhort all Christians to take and put on this Armour, that they may be able to withstand the Evil one, and to stand too in the evil Day. We see we are all engag'd in a Holy War with the Devil, the World and the Flesh; and that these are all powerful, cunning and dangerous Foes, apt to inveigle, betray and undo us; and therefore it stands us upon to arm our selves as well as we can against them. Our Saviour willeth him that goeth to war, to sit down and consider the Number and Forces of his Enemy, and whether he be able to meet him with a greater or lesser Strength, lest he be foil'd, and miscarry thro his own Inconsideration. And as this is to be done in ordinary Battles, so is it much more to be minded in these spiritual Conflicts; where, as the Honour of the Victory, so the Danger of the Defeat is much greater. Let us then manfully set our selves against those Enemies, against whom we have list'd our selves, and proclaim'd open War. Our Apostle, we see, hath furnish'd us with Armour both offensive and defensive, in the Use whereof we may be assur'd of Success, and to come off *more than Conquerors thro Christ that loveth us.* If we stand our Ground, we are sure to win the Field, and to be crown'd at last with a glorious Victory; so we are told by the Captain of our Salvation, *Be faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life:* and so St. Paul found by Experience, who having fought the good Fight of Faith, and finished his Course with Patience, had a Crown laid up for him, which God the righteous Judg will give to him, and to all that love and look for his Appearance. 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.

Wherefore, my Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and put on the whole Armour of God, *viz. The Girdle of Truth,* that ye may know the Truth as it is in Jesus; *The Breastplate of Righteousness,* to guard you from all Iniquity: Have your Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace, that you may run the Paths of God's Commandments: Take to you the Shield of Faith, that will defend you from all

Gospel for the 21st Sunday after Trinity. 443

all the Darts and Devices of the Devil: Put on the *Helmet or Hope of Salvation*, to quicken you in the Ways of Vertue; and forget not the *Sword of the Spirit*, to preserve you from all Vice and Error. To all which add fervent Prayer and Supplication for a Blessing upon all these; so shall ye be able to withstand in the evil Day, and having done all, to stand.



DISCOURSE LIII.

The GOSPEL for the One and Twentieth Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. John iv. 46, to the end.

There was a certain Nobleman, whose Son was sick at Capernaum; when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him, that he would come down and heal his Son, for he was at the point of Death, &c.

THE Gospel for the Day contains a Relation of a Miracle, wrought on a certain Nobleman's Son, who lay sick at *Capernaum*, his own City, the Place of his principal Residence, where many of his Miracles were done. The Relation of it begins thus: *There was a certain Nobleman, whose Son was sick at Capernaum; when he heard that Jesus was come there, he went unto him, &c.* Where we may observe, that the Report of his Miracles drew Persons of all Ranks and Qualities unto him, Rich and Poor, Honourable and Mean; some of all sorts came to see and partake of the Influence of his sanative or healing Power. Here we find a certain Nobleman coming to him, who, as some Translators tell us, was a Royal Officer, viz. one of *Herod* the Tetrarch's principal Officers, who was at that time King of the Country of *Galilee*. And elsewhere we read of *Nicodemus*, a Ruler of the Jews, drawing

444 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the
drawing nigh to him, led by the Fame of his mighty Works.
John 3. 1, 2.

'Tis true indeed, Christ, in the Beginning of his Ministry, call'd only Fishermen and Mechanicks, the meanest and most illiterate Persons, to be his Disciples and Followers; to shew his Doctrine to be purely Divine, without any Mixture of Art, human Power or Policy, to carry it on, of which their great Ignorance and Simplicity could not give the least colour of Suspicion. This is the Sense of St. Paul in these words: *Not many Wise, not many Mighty, not many Noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the World to confound the wise, and the weak things of the World to confound the mighty; and the base things of the World, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are:* 1 Cor. 1. 16. And by such weak and contemptible Means in the Eyes of Men, the Word of God mightily grew and prevail'd; and being thus spread and confirm'd by Miracles, it drew in Profelytes in all Places, and of all Ranks and Conditions: among the rest, our Nobleman or Courtier in the Text, believ'd and came to him. But what was his Errand? Why, *He besought him, that he would come down, and heal his Son*; and this he did by reason of the Extremity of his Sickness, *for he was at the point of Death*: He had before try'd all the Arts of Physick, and the Skill of Physicians, but all in vain; nothing appear'd in him but Death, which made him to have recourse to our Saviour, beseeching him to effect that Cure on his Son by a Divine Power, which was no otherwise to be done.

Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see Signs and Wonders, ye will not believe. Our Saviour perceiv'd, that this Nobleman's Faith depended mainly upon the Report of his Miracles, that 'twas the seeing or hearing of them that brought him to him; and unless he did see some Wonder or other before him, his Faith would grow weak, if not die away. *Except ye see Signs and Wonders, ye will not believe*: Where he seems to blame this Nobleman for what he more sharply reprov'd in the Pharisees, who asking a Sign from him, answer'd, *An evil and adulterous Generation seeketh after a Sign, and there shall be no Sign given it but the Sign of the Prophet Jonas, &c.* Mat. 12. 38, 39. Where he doth not altogether condemn all asking for a Sign; for it being foretold of the Messias, that he should come with Miracles, Signs and great Wonders, they might well enough ask a
Sign

Sign or Miracle of him for their Satisfaction: and therefore we find him often appealing to his Miracles for the Truth of his Mission, and calling upon the World to believe him, if not for his own, yet for his Work's sake. *If I had not done the Works among them (saith he) which no Man else did, they had not had Sin, i. e. in not believing me; John 15. 24.* It was not then the Expectation of Miracles, that our Saviour rebuk'd in them, but their desiring them for wrong Ends, and their being unsatisfy'd in the Kind and Nature of them: they must have some Wonder done, more to please their Fancy, than to confirm their Faith; all the Miracles he had done on Earth would not satisfy, but they must have a Sign or Prodigy from Heaven; that is, some blazing Sight or Shew in the Air, to feed their Eyes, and set the World a gazing. 'Twas their Hypocrisy and Unbelief, their Curiosity and Incredulity, that Christ there condemn'd, and therefore would not gratify their vain Humours in doing more, when he had done enough already for their Conviction, if they had any mind to believe; for such as these, he tells them, he had but one Miracle more, and instead of a Sign from Heaven, they should have only one from the Earth, viz. the Sign of the Prophet *Jonas*, who was a Token or Type of Christ's Resurrection from the Dead, the last and greatest of all Miracles: for as *Jonas* lay three Days bury'd in the Whale's Belly, and then came to Life again, so should the Son of Man lie three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth, and then rise again from the Dead. And if that Miracle would not convince them, nothing could, and so they must be seal'd up under final Impenitence and Infidelity. This was the Case of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, those Monsters of Unbelief and Hypocrisy.

But our Nobleman in the Text was not so faithless or unbelieving; he desir'd indeed a Sign, but he was convinc'd and converted by it; he did not ask it to gratify his Curiosity, but to strengthen his Faith, and to be the more firmly persuaded of his Power to heal his Son: And therefore he renew'd his Request unto him, saying, *Sir, come down e'er my Child die.* Christ perceiv'd the Increase of his Faith by the Earnestness of his Suit, he found his Belief of his Power grew stronger and stronger, and that he was well assur'd of his Ability to cure his Son, tho left by all Physicians; and without the Aid of his Divine Power, the Case was desperate, and without Remedy. Jesus perceiving all
this,

this, and willing farther to encourage the Increase of his Faith, saith unto him, *Go thy way, thy Son liveth*; i.e. return home as speedily and cheerfully as thou canst, and when thou comest to thy House, thou shalt find thy Son alive and in good Health: Words full of Comfort to one press'd with Grief, and Fear of losing his beloved Son.

But what Influence had these Words on the Nobleman, to whom they were spoken? Why, a very good one; for the next words tell us, that *the Man believed the Word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way*: He was fully persuaded of the Truth of what Christ had told him, and stagger'd not through Unbelief or Distrust concerning it, but went his way homeward with a Heart full of Joy, and free from all Doubts and Fears concerning his Son.

And the Event prov'd accordingly; for *as he was now going down, his Servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy Son liveth*: And when he came to his House, he found his Son not only recover'd, but perfectly sound and well as he was before. And the better to satisfy himself in the Circumstances of this extraordinary Cure, he *enquired of his Servants the Hour when he began to amend*, to see whether it answer'd the Time in which he spake those words to him: *And they said unto him, It was yesterday at the seventh Hour, that the Fever left him*; by which Answer, *The Father knew that it was at the same Hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy Son liveth*: the Circumstance of Time making the Cure so much the more remarkable.

This is the Miracle here related in all its Circumstances, which was exceeding great, considering the extreme Sickness of the Person, who was at the point of Death, and so left for dead by all that acted by the natural and artificial Ways of Medicine; so that the Recovery of him was the saving of one from the Grave, who was just dropping into it, and in a manner raising him from the Dead.

But what Effect had this Miracle upon the Nobleman, at whose Request it was done? Why, that the following words tell us; *He himself believed, and his whole House*: He concluded, that the Cure wrought upon his Son could not be done but by a Divine Power, and that likewise was a sufficient Demonstration, that the Doctrine deliver'd by him must be also Divine; for Miracles being the Seal of a Divine Commission, he very well thought that God would never set it to an Impostor, nor empower any to do those things, but one that comes from him: And therefore he

truly

truly enough took him for the Messias, and believ'd in him, making an open Profession of his Faith in him, as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World. And this he did not only for himself, in his own Person, but in the Name of all his Family, who embrac'd the same Faith, and became Profelytes to, and Followers of our Saviour; for so 'tis said, that *he himself believed, and his whole House*. The like we read of *Nicodemus*, another great Man, and Ruler among the Jews, who was convinc'd and profelyted by the same Means, owning Christ to be a great Prophet sent from God: *John 3. 2. Rabbi (saith he) I know thou art a Teacher come from God, for no Man could do the Works that thou dost, except God were with him.* And before him many of the Jews, that were at *Jerusalem*, believ'd in him, when they saw the Miracles which he did; *John 2. 23.* So vain was that Cavil of the People, *Have any of the Rulers believed on him?* since the Nobleman in the Text, and *Nicodemus*, a Ruler of the Jews, and *Crispus*, a Ruler of the Synagogue, with many others, became his Disciples; *Acts 18. 8.* And indeed his Miracles were great enough to convince the World, that he was the Person prophesy'd of, and promis'd to come for the Salvation of Mankind. This was the End of all the Miracles he did, which far exceeded all that was done by *Moses*, or *Elias*, or any of the Prophets that went before him, both in the Nature, Number, and Manner of doing them.

As for the Nature of his Miracles, they consisted in raising the Dead, and doing other supernatural Works, which no mere Man ever did or could do, of which we have many Instances in the Gospel; but the Wonder of all Wonders was the raising himself from the Dead, after he had lain three Days in the Grave. This was foretold by the Prophets, and spoken of by himself before his Death, saying, *Destroy this Temple*, meaning his Body, *and in three Days I will raise it up*; which he accordingly did, to the Terror of his Enemies, and the Joy of all his Friends and Followers.

And as his Miracles exceeded those of *Moses* and the Prophets in the Nature of them, so did they in their Number too: *Moses* did some few Miracles, but Christ vastly more, as well as greater. *Elias* indeed rais'd one from the Dead, but Christ many, and among them one that had lain four Days in the Grave: beside which, he rais'd to Life the Widow's Son of the City of *Naim*; he restor'd to Life the Daugh-

Daughter of *Jairus*, a Ruler of the Synagogue; with many more, mention'd in some of the foregoing Gospels.

Lastly, Christ's Miracles exceeded all others in the Manner of doing them; for he did them with a Look, with a Word, with a Touch, and many other ways, which could have no natural Force or Energy to the producing those Effects: He rais'd *Lazarus* from the Grave only by saying, *Lazarus come forth*; he restor'd the Widow's Son at *Naim* only by touching the Bier; he rais'd the Daughter of *Jairus*, by taking her by the Hand, and bidding her *arise*. *Moses* fed some of the *Israelites* with Bread from Heaven, but Christ multiply'd upon Earth a few Loaves and Fishes to the feeding of many Thousands; and there remain'd more after they were all fill'd, than was at first set before them. The Event of all which was, that many believ'd on him, as this Nobleman here did with all his House.

But the Atheists and Infidels of our Age have started two Difficulties about this Matter, that must be a little remov'd.

The one is about the Truth and Certainty of these Miracles.

The other is about the way of distinguishing true and real Miracles from those that are false and feign'd.

For the First, the clearest Evidence that can be given of any Matter of Fact, is the Testimony of such Persons as were Eye-witnesses of it; and this Evidence we have for the mighty Works and Actions of our Blessed Saviour: The things they attested were such as might be fully perceiv'd by them that saw them; they were no Illusions of the Senses, but real and visible Miracles. The Man that was born blind, was known to be so by all the Country where he liv'd; and his being restor'd to Sight was after as publick as his former Blindness, and was so acknowledg'd by all about him: insomuch that the blind Man saw more than the whole *Sanhedrim*; for when they said, *Moses we know, but for this Fellow, meaning Christ, we know not from whence he is*; he reply'd to them, *Why, this is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened my Eyes: If he were not of God, he could do nothing, for God heareth not Sinners; but if any be sent by God, and doth his Will, him he heareth*: by which he plainly attested his Divine Commission. The dead Man at *Naim* was known to be so not only by the Bearers, who were carrying him to his Grave, but by the neighbouring People, who were attending

tending upon his Funeral; and his coming to Life again; upon Christ's touching the Bier, was as visible and attested by all that were present: and so *St. Luke* tells us, *It was done before much People.* Luke 7. 12.

But the great Miracle of Christ's Resurrection, upon which the Truth and Certainty of all the rest depend, was attested by so many Eye-witnesses, as set it out of the reach of all Doubt and Contradiction. Of his Death and Burial both Jews and Romans were Eye-witnesses: The Soldiers that came to break his Bones, forbore it, because they found him already dead. That he return'd to Life again the third Day, was attested not only by his Apostles and Disciples, but by many other Witnesses, who saw and convers'd with him after his Rising from the Dead: That he was not a mere Phantasm or Apparition (as some objected) appear'd by the Disciples handling and seeing him; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as they saw him to have: And that he rose in the same real Body, in which he died, was evident by the great Incredulity of *St. Thomas*, who thrust his Hand into the Hole of his Side, and saw the Print of the Nails in his Hands and Feet, which fasten'd him to the Cross; and so became no longer faithless, but believing. To all which, if we add the Number and Concurrence of these Witnesses, their great Care and Fidelity in relating them, their great Courage and Constancy in propagating them, notwithstanding all the Threats and Terrors to hinder them, together with the great Success and general Belief they have gain'd every where; we may safely conclude the Evidence of them to be set beyond all reasonable Doubts or Distrust of the Truth of them, and to cut off all the Pleas and Pretences of Infidelity.

But how may we distinguish true Miracles from false and counterfeit ones? For we read that the Magicians imitated the Miracles of *Moses*, and did many wonderful things like him. In the New Testament we are told that Satan and many false Prophets should come with Signs, and Miracles, and lying Wonders, and with that Deceivableness of Unrighteousness, as if it were possible to deceive the very Elect: 'Tis requisite therefore to give some Marks for the knowing one from the other, without which the Argument from Miracles would lose all its Force. In answer hereunto, regard must be had to the Doctrine which Miracles are brought to confirm: if they are brought to confirm no Doctrine at all, or a Doctrine that hath been tho-

rowly confirm'd already, we may conclude them to be false and lying Wonders; for the end of Miracles being to seal a Divine Revelation, for God to work Miracles, where no Divine Truth is to be confirm'd, would be for him to set the broad Seal of Heaven to a Blank: and for the Spirit of God thus to confirm a Revelation that hath been already confirm'd, would be to exert its Divine Power to no purpose, and to do such great things in vain; which is absurd and irrational to imagine.

Again, if any pretend to Miracles to confirm any false Doctrine, we may conclude them to be but Juggles and Impostures; for as God sets not his Seal to a Blank, so much less to a Lye: and therefore we read, that if any false Prophet foretold things to come, or shew'd any Sign or Wonder, though the thing came to pass, yet, if he persuaded to Idolatry, or any evil Course, he was to be rejected as an Impostor; and the Apostle tells us, that if any preach any other Doctrine, than that we have, though he pretend to Miracles, yea, though he were an Angel from Heaven, he was to be accursed.

Moreover, True Miracles may be known from false by the Circumstances and Manner of their Operation. Feign'd Miracles are commonly done by magical Arts and Enchantments, by Sleight of Hand, or Illusion of Sight; and such are perform'd oftentimes in the dark, or by Consent and Collusion of Parties. Of this kind were those of the Magicians, who contended with *Moses*, till they were forc'd to own the Finger of God in *Moses's* Miracles, and only Juggling and Sleight of Hand in their own. Such were the Wonders done by *Simon Magnus*, *Apollonius*, and others, in opposition to the Apostles; whereas Christ's Miracles were open and plain in the View of all People, and the undeniable Effects of a Divine Power, and all done to seal the Truth of the most Divine and Heavenly Revelation that was ever made known to the World. Persons known to be dead, by a word's speaking were brought to Life again, and seen to be so by Multitudes of People; Diseases incurable by the Rules of Physick, were immediately heal'd by a Word, by a Touch, by a Thought, and that as well absent as present. So was the Miracle perform'd on the Nobleman's Son, of which we read in the Gospel for this Day; which is here said to be the second Miracle he wrought after his Return into *Cana of Galilee*, where he wrought the first.

This

This is the Substance of this Day's Gospel, which may teach us these Lessons.

1st, This Nobleman's coming to Christ, may teach the greatest Persons not to disdain to come to him; for he is higher than the highest, and the Necessities of all Men may drive them to him. Indeed Vertue and Religion add a Lustre to Greatness, adorn Nobility, and render it the more Noble and Illustrious: *Nobilitas sola est atque unica Virtus*; Vertue is only true valuable Nobility: which should make Men study not so much to be great as good, and to prefer the Character of a true Christian before the highest of all earthly Titles.

Lastly, From this Discourse we may learn the Goodness of God in confirming our Faith by such evident Effects of a Divine Power; and likewise to answer the End and Design of them, by a firm believing in Christ, and a steadfast adhering to the Doctrine deliver'd by him: by both laying the whole stress of our Hopes of Mercy and Salvation upon him, who is able to cure all the Maladies of Body and Soul, and will e'er long place us above the Reach or Danger of either: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE LIV.

The EPISTLE for the Two and Twentieth
Sunday after *Trinity*.

Phil. i. 3 ——— 11.

I thank my God upon every Remembrance of you, always, in every Prayer of mine for you all; making request with Joy, for your Fellowship in the Gospel, from the first Day until now, &c.

THE Collect for this Day prays to God, to keep his Household the Church in continual Godliness; that thro his Protection it may be free from all Adversities, and devoutly given to serve him in good Works. Suitable whereunto,

The Epistle for the Day contains St. Paul's Prayer for these things in the behalf of the *Philippians*, that God would prosper the Church among them, and that they might persevere in Godliness and good Works. It begins,

First, With Thanksgiving unto God, for the good Work begun in them.

Secondly, It goes on with Petitions for the farther Increase and Perfection of it.

Thirdly, It concludes with some Helps and Means of continuing of it to the Day of Christ. Of which particularly; beginning,

First, As the Epistle doth, with Thanksgiving unto God, for the good Work that was begun in them: *I thank my God* (saith he) *upon every Remembrance of you*. St. Paul at the time of writing this Epistle was a Prisoner at Rome for the Name of Christ, where these *Philippians*, whom he had lately converted to Christianity, sent him some Relief by the hands of *Epaphroditus* their Bishop. In return whereof, he sent them by the same hands this Epistle, full of

of Kindness and Acknowledgments; wherein he declares his hearty and frequent Remembrance of them, who had so kindly remember'd him. Their liberal Bounty towards him, had left such deep Impressions on his Mind, that nothing could wear them off; for he could neither forget the Kindness, nor the Persons that bestow'd it: both which put him upon thanking and praising *God upon every Remembrance* of them. And because he had no other way of requiting of them, but by praying for them, he lets them know, that he was *always* mindful of them *in every Prayer of his*, that Grace and Peace, with all other spiritual and temporal Blessings, might be multiply'd on them all: *Making request with Joy for your Fellowship in the Gospel, from the first day until now*; mingling Rejoicing with his Petitions, for their being receiv'd into the Household of Christ's Church, and their liberal contributing to the propagating of the Gospel: which he observ'd in them from their first receiving the Faith to the present time, and therefore he never ceas'd praying and praising God for them, from the day that he first knew them till now. *Being confident of this very thing* (as he goes on) *that he who hath begun a good Work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ*. The good Work here said to be begun in them, may be understood either of their first receiving the Gospel, whereby they were turn'd from the Darkness of Paganism to the Light of Christianity, and from the Power of Satan to the Privileges of the Sons of God; or else of this good beginning of their Charity, in relieving the Necessities of the distressed Saints: in both which, the Apostle is here persuaded of the *Philippians*, that they will persevere to the coming of Christ; that is, that he who inclin'd them to embrace the Christian Faith, will keep them stedfast in it to the last; and that he who open'd their Hearts in Bounty and Liberality to the Needy, will extend and enlarge their Bowels to the Day of Christ, when they shall receive the Reward of so doing.

And this Opinion, he tells them in the next words, it was but *meet for him to have of them all*; not only for the great Affection he bore to them, as *having them all in his Heart*, but *forasmuch as both in his Bonds, and in the Defence and Confirmation of the Gospel, they were all Partakers of his Grace*: meaning, that in the Defence and Maintenance of the Gospel they all join'd and participated with him, both in the Joys and Sufferings that attended so difficult a

454 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

Work. And therefore he calls God to witness what a sincere and entire Affection he harbour'd in his Breast towards them ; *God is my Record* (saith he) *how greatly I long after you all in the Bowels of Jesus Christ.*

But, *Secondly*, what was the Matter of his Prayer, or the things he interceded for in their behalf ? Why, that the following part of the Epistle for the Day will inform us : which goes on thus ;

1st, *And this I pray, that your Love may abound more and more in Knowledg, and in all Judgment.* And then it follows,

2ly, *That ye may approve things that are excellent.*

3ly, *That ye may be sincere, and without offence till the Day of Christ.*

4ly, *That ye may be filled with the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the Glory and Praise of God.*

These are the chief Heads of the Apostle's Prayer for these *Philippians* ; which being all matters of great weight and benefit, may be recommended to the earnest Desires and Endeavours of all Christians.

1. The first and great thing here pray'd for, is for the Increase of the Grace of Love, which is the Bond of Perfection, and the fulfilling of the Law ; *And this I pray, that your Love may abound more and more in Knowledg, and in all Judgment.* And this Love relates both to God and Man ; the one being to be lov'd for himself, and the other for God's sake.

(1.) As for the Love of God, that is the prime Duty of Religion, that includes all other parts of it : it hath the first and supreme Being for its Object, being fix'd on God the great Creator and Disposer of all things ; who is the most amiable and lovely of all Beings, having all Goodness in himself, and shewing all Goodness to his Creatures ; and therefore this Grace is well worth the praying for. So did the Apostle here for the *Philippians*, that the Belief of the Gospel might beget in them a hearty Love to God, with an inward Delight and Complacency in him : so should we likewise, that God would shed abroad his Love into our Hearts, and that too not in low and weak measures, but in the most ardent and intense degrees, that it may daily increase, and *abound in us more and more.* Which we should the rather do, because the Love of the World is too apt to abate, and sometimes to extinguish the Love of God. Earthly things have a false Byass, and draw strongly ; be-
ing

ing present to our view, they affect and inveigle our Senses, and thereby take off the Heart from divine and spiritual Objects. Hence we find many to serve Mammon more than their Maker, and others to be Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God: and therefore we have great need to pray both for our selves and others, that our Love to God may abound more and more, that it may not be weaken'd by any worldly Comforts or Enjoyments, but may prevail over all the Wiles of the World and the Devil. To which end, our Love must abound *in Knowledg and in all Judgment, i.e.* in the Knowledg of God's infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, with all other his amiable and adorable Perfections; and we must likewise weigh in the Ballance of a sound Judgment all earthly things, which in comparison of him are nothing, less than nothing, and Vanity. And as this Prayer here is, that our Love to God may abound and increase in us; so is it,

(2.) For the Increase of our Love to the Brethren, and that our Love to one another may abound more and more. A true Love of God will necessarily draw after it the Love of our Neighbour; for he being God's Creature and Servant, that hath his Image stamp'd upon him, and in some measure Partaker of the divine Nature, he is to be lov'd not only for his own, but for God's sake: which made St. John affirm, *That he that saith he loves God, and hates his Brother, is a Lyar; for if he love not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* 1 John 4. 20. Sight and Conversation is apt to breed and beget Love, whereas 'tis not easy to love one whom we never saw; and if our Love extend not to our Neighbour, whom we daily behold and converse with, how can it reach to Heaven, where our Eye cannot pierce? Indeed, the Comfort and Happiness of human Society depend upon the mutual Amity and Good-will of all its Members; for that will incline them to be helpful to each other, and make them willing both to relieve the Necessities, and rejoice in the Welfare of one another. Such a Temper as this both needs and deserves our Prayers; for Men are naturally envious and malicious, hateful and hating one another; Satan is ever administering Occasions of Strife, and the World is as ready to embrace them, and to add Fuel to the Fire. And therefore 'tis highly requisite, that we should pray for a Spirit of Meekness and Charity, and *that our Love may abound more and more to one another,*

456 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

and that too *in Knowledge and in all Judgment*; that we may wisely perform all the good Offices of Mercy and Kindness, by a discreet Choice of fit and proper Objects for them, viz. not the idle and the lazy, but the aged Poor, and such as by unavoidable Accident and Necessity are cast upon us. This is the first thing that the Apostle here prays for in the behalf of the *Philippians*, to wit, that their Love might abound, and increase more and more, and that it might appear in all the judicious Acts of Bounty and Charity.

2. The next thing is, *That they might approve things that are excellent.* Where by things that are excellent we are to understand things that relate to another Life, which are of the highest nature, and the greatest worth; such as the Favour of God, the Pardon of Sin, a Title to Heaven, an Interest in Christ and the Promises of the Gospel, and the like: things that may be justly accounted truly excellent, and preferable to all other matters.

Some Translations, instead of *approving things that are excellent*, read, *discerning between things that differ*; that is, distinguishing spiritual and heavenly things from all carnal and earthly Enjoyments, which are of an inferior and different nature, and vastly below them.

Now to approve the things that are excellent, implies,
(1.) The knowing or right understanding of them; for none can approve of a thing of which he hath no knowledge, no more than a blind Man can judge of Colours, or a deaf Man of Sounds. To approve, is an Act of the Will and Affections, which must ever follow the Dictates and Guidance of the Understanding, or else they cannot go aright. Ignorance is to the Mind what Blindness is to the Eye, its Blemish and Imperfection, that hinders it from discerning of Truth, and so misleads into Error. *The natural Man* (saith the Apostle) *discerns not the things of God*; and he that discerns them not, to be sure can never like or approve them. The Cock in the Fable prefer'd a Barley-Corn before a Jewel, because he knew not either the Meanness of the one, or the Worth of the other; and for the same reason the Worldling prefers the Toys and Trifles of this Life, before an inestimable Treasure in the next, for want of a right understanding of either. So that to approve the best things, evermore supposes the knowledge of them; which for the Excellency of the Object may be well reckon'd the most excellent Knowledge. St. John styles it *Life eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he*
hath

Epistle for the 22d Sunday after Trinity. 457

hath sent; John 17. 3. St. Paul desir'd to know nothing among the Corinthians, but Jesus Christ, and him crucify'd; 2 Cor. 2. And likewise told these Philippians, that he counted all other things but as Loss and Dung, in comparison of the Excellence of the Knowledge of Christ; Chap. 3. 8.

(2.) To approve things that are excellent, implies not only the Knowledge, but a firm and stedfast Belief of them. 'Tis a great Malady of the Mind (as a Learned Divine hath observ'd) to be fill'd with Doubts and Diffidence about the most excellent and useful matters; for these are sad Symptoms of a shatter'd and broken Understanding. A Man may indeed entertain some Doubts in matters impertinent to Life or Happiness without any danger, because neither his present or future Welfare is much concern'd in them. But to be wavering and at a loss in things wherein our greatest Concernments lie, is a very great Infelicity. Thus to call in question the Differences of Good and Evil, to doubt the Truth of Divine Revelation, and to be in suspense about the Doctrine of the Gospel, and other like weighty and important Matters, is a sore Disease and Infirmary of the Mind, that fills it with great Anxieties, and brings on the greatest Uncertainties of Life and Practice.

And therefore we are told, that *he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; Heb. 11. 6. that is, he must have a firm Persuasion both of the Being and the Bounty of his Maker, together with a stedfast Faith in the Truth of the Gospel, and an unshaken Belief of the Method of Salvation prescrib'd in it. This is to approve things that are excellent, and is what St. Paul here prays for in the behalf of these Philippians.

Lastly, 'Tis not only to know and believe, but to chuse these divine and excellent things, above all other vain and useless matters. There is a Vanity that reigns too much in the Minds of Men, which leads them too far into the Search of nice and needless Speculations; and this hath occasion'd the starting of many curious and foolish Questions, which engender Strife, and greatly disturb the Peace and Quiet of the World. This is an Itch that hath seiz'd some of the wiser Men, who have thereby infected vulgar Minds, turning many from the Truth, and turning them unto Fables. The Apostle sharply rebukes these things in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus, as you may read, 1 Tim. 6. 4, 5. & Tit. 3. 9.

To

To cure this Vanity, the Apostle here directs, to study and *approve the things that are excellent*; that is, to divert the Mind from vain useless Speculations, and fix it on more solid and useful Truths, such as the Knowledge of God and our selves, with the things that pertain to Life and Godliness: the doing whereof is the second thing here pray'd for in the behalf of the *Philippians*.

3. The third is, for Sincerity and an inoffensive Conversation; *That ye may be sincere and without offence to the day of Christ*. Among the many Faults and Miscarriages in Religion, there is none more odious unto God, and more dangerous to Mens Souls, than that of Hypocrisy, which is a mocking and affronting of God under a pretence of serving him: 'tis like *Judas's* betraying of Christ with a Kiss, or the Jews crying, *Hail Master!* when they were about to crucify him. Hypocrisy is no better than a lying unto God and Man, and seeks what it can to put a cheat upon both: 'tis an Affectation or seeming to be what a Man is not, and so 'tis the Counterfeit of Religion, or an outward Shew and Appearance without the inward Truth and Reality of it. This was the great Sin of the *Pharisees*, for which our Saviour denounces many Woes against them. *Mat. 23.*

Now to be preserv'd from this Sin and Misery, the Apostle directs to pray for Sincerity with an upright and inoffensive Conversation; that is, to be the same within as they appear without, that their Words may agree with their Minds, and their Actions with both. This is that divine Grace that preserves the Purity of Heart and Life, and so recommends us both to God and Men. This is that *Simplicity and godly Sincerity*, in which the Apostle wills us to *have our Conversation*, that we may continue blameless and without offence *to the day of Christ*; that is, till his second Coming to Judgment, when he will publickly expose and punish the Hypocrite, and openly commend and reward his faithful Servants.

4. The last thing here pray'd for, is, that the *Philippians* might *be filled with the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God*. Where by the *Fruits of Righteousness*, we are to understand the Fruits of God's Holy Spirit; such as Joy, Love, Peace, Long-suffering, Meekness, Patience, Temperance, and the like, reckon'd up in *Gal. 5.*

To be filled with them, is to abound and grow up in them from a Stock of divine Grace, wrought in us by the Operation of the Holy Ghost, and confer'd upon us by the Merits and Mediation of *Jesus Christ*: which Fruits redound not only to our own good, but to the glory and praise of God. For herein is my Father glorify'd (saith Christ) that ye bring forth much Fruit. John 15.

Thus we see the several Parts of the Apostle's Prayer in the behalf of the *Philippians*, the Subject of this Day's Epistle: From all which we may learn,

1. That 'tis an Office of great Charity to pray for one another; for this is the best, and sometimes the only way we have to do them any service. So did St. Paul here to the *Philippians*, whom he always remember'd in every Prayer, making request with Joy. The like we find doing for the *Colossians*, Chap. 1.9. Since the day we heard of your Faith, we cease not to pray for you. And elsewhere, God forbid that I should sin against God, in ceasing to pray for you. As if it were an Act of the greatest Impiety against God, as well as Injustice and Unkindness towards our Neighbour, to neglect so weighty a Duty in their behalf. These pious Examples recommend to us this great Office of Charity, to be tenderly affected to, and to be always mindful of one another in our Prayers.

2. We learn hence the Subject-matter of our Prayers, or what it is that we are to pray for in the behalf of each other: And that is, for the Increase of Love to God and Man, that it may abound more and more towards both, for the Knowledg and Approbation of the best things, viz. such as are necessary to our present Peace and future Happiness; for such a sincere and unblemish'd Life, as may lead to the Attainment of both; and finally, for such a Stock of Grace and good Fruits, as may tend to the Glory of God and our own Salvation.

This is a good Direction both for the Matter and Manner of our Prayers for one another; to which if we keep, we shall do well, being assur'd of finding the Return of such Prayers in our own Bosom: for Christ hath encourag'd us with the Promise of an Answer to such Petitions, and that whatsoever we ask the Father in his Name, he will give it. Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LV.

The GOSPEL for the Two and Twentieth
Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Matthew xviii. 21, to the end.

Peter said unto Jesus, Lord, how oft shall my Brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven. Therefore is the Kingdom of Heaven liken'd unto a certain King, who would take account of his Servants, &c.

THE Subject of the Gospel for this Day, is touching the great Duty of Mens forgiving one another their Trespases; a Duty frequently injoin'd and inculcated by our Blessed Saviour, and particularly in that excellent and divine Form of Prayer, which he gave to his Disciples, in which he taught them to ask Forgiveness of their Trespases, as they forgave those that trespass against them: where our forgiving of others, is made both the Condition and Measure of that Forgiveness which we ask for our selves; and to desire the one without doing the other, is rather to provoke than to prevail with him for a Blessing.

Now the Nature, Necessity, and other Circumstances of this Duty, are explain'd to us in the Gospel for this Day; all which are illustrated by a Parable of a certain King's dealing with his Servants, as we shall see in the handling of it.

The Gospel begins with a Question mov'd by St. Peter, who came to Jesus, and said unto him, *Lord, how oft shall my Brother sin against me, and I forgive him?* The Occasion of this Question was from some Discourse going before, where our Saviour had said to his Disciples, *If thy Brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his Fault between thee*

thee and him; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gain'd thy Brother: that is, go and admonish him privately to avoid all Shame and Reproach, and if he repent and amend, forgive him. Now here St. Peter interpos'd, I know that we are to forbear our offending Brother; and if upon the first, second, or third Admonition he repent, to forgive him. But what if he who hath thus trespass'd, and repented once, relapse into the same or greater Fault, and repent again, how often must I thus bear with him and forgive him? Must I do this over and over again, till it comes perhaps to seven times? To this Jesus reply'd, *I say not unto thee till seven times, but until seventy times seven.* Where there is *Numerus certus pro incerto*; and the Sense of the Phrase is, that this is to be done not only often, but always, without any limitation of time: tho the number of his Offences be many and often repeated, yet as often as he renews his Repentance, so often are we to renew our Forgiveness; according to that of St. Luke, Chap. 17. 4. *If thy Brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.* Whereby we see, that God would have our pardoning Mercy be in some measure like his, *i. e.* unwearied and unlimited; which is to be *merciful as our Heavenly Father is merciful.* But the better to explain this matter, and to shew how fully, how freely, and how frequently we are to remit the Injuries and Trespasses committed against us, 'tis here set forth and illustrated by a Parable, representing the Benefit of so doing, and the Danger of doing otherwise.

The Parable begins in the next words: *Therefore is the Kingdom of Heaven liken'd to a certain King, who would take account of his Servants.* Where by the Kingdom of Heaven is meant the Church of Christ, together with all the Parts and Members of it. God's dealing with them now under the Gospel, is here very fitly compar'd to a certain King, who had many Servants, whom he call'd to bring in their Account, to see how they had manag'd their Trust, and what Debts they had contracted. By this King here is represented God Almighty, the great King and Sovereign of the World, who is elsewhere compar'd to a certain Householder going into a far Country, and committing sundry Goods and Talents to his Servants, whom he after call'd to a Reckoning for them. But to go on with the Parable;

When

When the King *began to reckon* with his Servants, the first that *was brought in* was found to *owe him upon account ten thousand Talents*. Now a Talent at that time was reckoned 750 Ounces of Silver, which at five Shillings an Ounce made the whole amount to a thousand eight hundred seventy five thousand Pounds; a vast Sum of Mony, and far beyond the power of any Servant to pay. By this is represented the many great and invaluable Mercies and Blessings for which we stand indebted to the Goodness of God; Mercies that we are never able either to reckon or requite.

But what did the King in the Parable to this Servant, who was run so deep in Arrears, as not to be able to get out? Why that the next Verse tells us; *Forasmuch as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his Wife and Children, and all that he had, and Payment to be made*. Where the Master order'd him to be used according to the Custom then in use among the Jews; which was, that Debtors that were not able to pay, were appointed to be sold, they and their Wives and Children, to become Servants and Bondmen to those that bought them, and by that Sale the Debt was to be satisfy'd. Of this Custom we read in 2 Kings 4. 1. where a Creditor came upon such an occasion to take *two Sons* of a distressed Widow *to be made Bondmen*. This Usage (as some Authors tell us) was only exercis'd on such Debtors, as by Idleness, Knavery, or Prodigality had render'd themselves unable to pay; whereas industrious Persons, who were disabled by unavoidable Accidents and Necessity, found more favour: tho this Custom is continu'd to this day in some barbarous Countries, in its utmost Rigour and Severity.

This Passage of the Parable is design'd to let us know what God in justice may exact from all wicked, ungrateful, and unprofitable Servants: he may require of them the utmost Farthing, or yield them up to be Slaves and Vassals to the worst of Enemies; or, which is worse, cast them into the Prison of Hell, and doom them to outer and eternal Darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

But how did this Servant behave himself under this sad and severe Sentence? Why it follows, *The Servant therefore fell down and worship'd him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all*. The indebted Servant, instead of denying or outfacing the Debt, in all Humility fell upon his Knees, praying him to shew mercy, and to mitigate

gate his Sentence, and not to use Extremity towards him; assuring him that he wanted not Will, but Ability to pay, and if he would grant him Time and Patience, he would do his utmost to discharge the Debt, and give him full Satisfaction.

This Passage gives us to understand, how we are to demean our selves towards God Almighty, to whom we stand so deeply indebted; to wit, not to disown or lessen the Mercies we have receiv'd, but humbly to acknowledg our great Obligations to the Divine Goodness, to be deeply sensible and sorry for any Abuse of them, to make fresh Promises and take up new Resolutions of making better Returns for them; imploring his Grace to enable and incline us to make him all possible Satisfaction.

But how did the Master in the Parable deal with the Servant upon this his humble Petition? Why very mercifully, as the following Words declare; *Then the Lord of that Servant was moved with Compassion, and loos'd him, and forgave him the Debt*: meaning, that he was so tenderly affected towards him, that he not only recall'd the former Sentence, but frankly remitted the whole Debt upon his bare Request; a great and unexpected Favour.

By this is represented the infinite Kindness and Readiness of God Almighty to shew Mercy, that he is a *God gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in Goodness and Truth, pardoning Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin*; not exacting from us more than we are able to pay, but willing upon our Submission to quit scores, to cancel our Debts, and to remember our Sins no more.

But what was the Carriage of this Servant, who had so great a Debt remitted him, towards his Fellow-Servants? Did his Master's Compassion towards him move his Bowels upon the like occasion towards them? And was he as willing to forgive others, as he was to be forgiven himself? No, quite otherwise; for the next words tell us, that *the same Servant went out and found one of his Fellow-Servants who ow'd him an hundred Pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest*. He who just before had ten thousand Talents frankly forgiven him, set upon his Fellow-Servant with the utmost Rigour for an hundred Pence; a small inconsiderable Sum in respect of the former, yea, not so much as a Penny to a Pound. He demanded it likewise with that Insolence and Indignity, as could no ways become the Station of a Servant,

vant, and acted rather the part of a Bailiff than a Creditor; for *he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat*, gave him many threatening Words, and perhaps Blows, roughly requiring him to make present Payment of the Debt. Strange Carriage! for one who was just before forgiven so vast a Sum, presently to apprehend another in so rigid a manner for a Debt many hundred times less. One would think so late a Favour from his Master, should not be so suddenly and so easily forgotten, but that the Greatness and Frankness of it should have left such deep Impressions upon him, as to have set him upon studying to make some Return, if not to the Master, to some of his Servants and Dependents: but instead of that, he neither regarded the Kindness of his Master, nor the Necessity of his Fellow-Servant, but acted with the Rudeness and Severity of one, who clearly overlook'd both.

But perhaps this indebted Servant might be surly and reproachful in his Language or Behaviour, either denying the Debt, or vainly delaying the Payment: No, far otherwise, for this poor Servant used the same humble Postures of Submission to him, as he did before to his Master. For this *Fellow-Servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all*. He shew'd the very same Respect, and put up the same Petition to him, as he who had so much forgiven him did before to his Master. And yet all this would prevail nothing with him; for the next words tell us, *He would not, but went and cast him into Prison, till he should pay the Debt*. The Master's Kindness, in the total remitting of his great Debt, could not melt him into the least Forbearance of his Brother for a vastly less; but he used the greatest Extremity towards him, casting him into Prison, never to be releas'd thence without paying the whole Debt.

This Passage of the Parable shews us the great Ingratitude and unworthy Dealing of some Men towards the greatest Benefactors. The great Kindness shew'd to this Servant, was intended to oblige him to shew the like to others, especially his Fellow-Servants; and the doing otherwise, was an Act of great Ingratitude: 'tis to be utterly insensible of the highest Obligations, and instead of requiring, to return Injuries and Indignities for the greatest Favours; which they that do, deserve to be branded with the blackest Marks of Reproach and Infamy.

But

But how did the other Servants resent this base and unworthy Treatment of one of their Fellow-Servants? Why that the following words declare; *So when the Fellow-Servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their Lord all that was done.* They were much troubled at the hard Usage and Sufferings of one of their Fellow-Servants, and likewise at the insolent and barbarous Behaviour of him that dealt thus unmercifully with him: and knowing how widely different this Usage was from what he himself had found from his Master, they came in a Body together, to inform their Lord of all that had pass'd. Which may teach us to resent all such Baseness and Ingratitude, and to bring all such cruel and barbarous Users of their Brethren to condign Punishment.

But what follow'd upon their acquainting their Lord with this matter? Why, 'tis said that *his Lord, after he had call'd him, said unto him, O thou wicked Servant, I forgave thee all that Debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy Fellow-Servant, even as I had pity on thee?* Where he first rebuk'd him with sharp and severe Language, calling him, *Thou wicked Servant;* and upbraiding him with his former Kindness, shew'd to so vile and unworthy a Wretch; together with his ungrateful and unrelenting Usage of his Fellow-Servant, in not shewing the least Compassion to him, when he himself had just then found so much. These words of the Parable are thus paraphras'd by a Learned Divine: "O thou unconscionable Man, thou canst not but remember how I lately forgave thee all that vast Sum owing to me, with which this of thy Fellow-Servant bears no proportion; and that upon thy bare Request, without any other Motive but my own Compassion, to invite me to so great an Act of Mercy: was it not then reasonable for thee, who hadst receiv'd such a Favour from thy Master, to have shew'd some pity at least in remitting so small a Sum, when I had remitted to thee six hundred thousand times as much?" This was smart and good Reasoning indeed, and enough to convince or shame the most hard-hearted Wretch.

But was this all that the Lord did to so wicked and unworthy a Servant? No, he knew well enough that Words to such vile Persons prove no better than Wind, and leave no Impression behind them: and therefore 'tis added, *That his Lord was wroth, and deliver'd him to the Tormentors, till*

he should pay all that was due to him: meaning, that he was justly enrag'd against him, and serv'd him as he had done his Fellow-Servant, delivering him to the Tormentors, that is, either the Bailiffs or Officers appointed to seize such Persons, who for the Miseries, Charges, and Troubles they commonly put upon them, are stil'd Tormentors; or else the Keepers of Prisons, who are wont to detain them there till the Debt is discharg'd. In short,

The Lord recall'd his former Pardon, and exacted from him the whole Debt, committing him to Goal, till he had paid the utmost Farthing.

This is the Parable appointed to be read for the Gospel of this Day: The Application whereof is in the Close of it, in these words; *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your Hearts forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases.* Where by this Resemblance we see what measure to expect from God in this matter, who will deal with us as we do with others: if we forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will our heavenly Father forgive ours; and they shall have Judgment without Mercy, who shew no Mercy.

This is the Drift and Scope of this Parable, from whence we may learn the following Lessons.

1. That 'tis an Act of Charity to remit a Debt, where it cannot be paid. This we learn from the Example of God himself, who requires from none more than they can do; and therefore we may not exact from any beyond their Ability. We are bid to be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful; and to follow the Example of his Beneficence and Charity, who forgiveth Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin. This God daily does for us, and this he expects we should in some measure do for one another. Not that any should take encouragement from hence wilfully to run into Debt with a design to defraud, or to pretend Poverty to enrich themselves with the Spoils of others: in such cases the Severity of the Law may and ought to take place. But in cases of real and extreme Necessity, and where unavoidable Accidents have occasion'd the Inability, there Mercy and Pity ought to be shew'd.

2. From the Servant's taking his Fellow-Servant by the Throat for a small Sum, when he himself was just before forgiven a much greater; we learn the Cruelty of the rigorous requiring of any, more than he is able to perform, espe-

especially when we our selves have found favour in that kind. The Master here had remitted to his Servant many Talents and Pounds, and yet the same Servant would not remit a few Pence or Farthings to his Fellow-Servant; for which the Master was so highly offended at his Cruelty and Ingratitude, that he revok'd his former Pardon, and call'd him to another Reckoning, where the remitted Sum was again charg'd upon him and exacted from him, and he cast into Prison till he should pay the utmost Farthing. The same Dealing may they reasonably expect, and will surely find at God's hand, who are thus cruel and unmerciful to their Fellow-Creatures. We daily run on the score with our Maker, and contract Debts to him, which we can never pay; and if we expect that God should forgive us our Debts, we must forgive them that are indebted unto us, without which we cannot hope for any Favour: for this is the Condition upon which God hath promis'd, and upon which we are to ask Forgiveness of *our Trespases*, viz. *as we forgive them that trespass against us*; without which, neither Reason nor Religion can give us any Encouragement to hope for it: for God expects that we should be so dispos'd towards our Brethren, as we would have him be towards us, which is no more than what the golden Rule of Reason and Equity requires of us; to wit, to do to others as we would be done by our selves. So that if we forgive others, we may reasonably hope to be forgiven our selves; but if we have no Bowels of Mercy and Compassion towards our Brethren, we may not wonder if God's be clos'd up, and yearn not towards us. Wherefore, in the

Last Place, let us learn to forgive others, as well as ask Forgiveness at God's hand; for these are so closely tack'd and link'd together, that we may not hope for God's Pardon, without granting ours. Let us lay aside all Malice and Prejudice against our Brethren, and quit all old Scores against those that have not paid that Duty and Respect that is owing to us; yea, let us forgive Enemies that have us'd us ill and done us harm, and then we may depend upon God's Goodness in forgiving our Offences. If we pass not by the lesser Debts and Wrongs of our Brethren, God will exact his greater from us; and therefore let us take heed, that we bring not God strictly to account with us, for our being too rigorous towards others: but let us learn to shew Mercy in smaller Matters, and then we shall find Mercy in greater; which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LVI.

The EPISTLE for the Three and Twentieth
Sunday after *Trinity*.

Phil. iii. 17, to the end.

Brethren, be Followers together of me, and mark them who walk so, as ye have us for Ensam- ple; for many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are Enemies of the Cross of Christ, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches God to hear the devout Prayers of his Church, and to grant that those things which we ask faithfully, may be obtain'd effectually. To which end,

The Epistle for the Day teaches us how our Persons must be qualify'd, that our Prayers may be accepted; to wit, by following our Forerunners in the Faith, and a pious Imitation of their Examples. It begins with the loving Compellation of *Brethren*, which the Apostle here gives to the *Philippians*, on purpose to insinuate and instil his Instructions into them; for that is better done by the endearing Expressions of Love and Kindness, than the rougher Methods of Power and Passion, as gentler Rains pierce deeper than greater Storms: and therefore St. Paul told *Philemon*, Phil. 8. 9. that tho he might command him as a Father, yet he chose rather to intreat him as a Brother. In like manner he treats the *Philippians* here, not as Strangers or Enemies, but intreats them as Friends and Brethren, the better to prevail and work upon them. The Advice he here ushers in with these Endearments, is, that they would follow his Steps, and those of the other Apostles, and observe and imitate those that walk so, as they have them for Ensamples; and that because there are many who walk very disorderly, and set such bad Examples before them, as lead only to Misery and Destruction, by minding nothing but Sensualities and earthly things; whereas the other will lead

lead them to Heaven, where their Conversation is : from whence also we look for a Saviour, and thereby prepare for the second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will then change our vile mortal Body into the fashion of his glorious Body, by that infinite Power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

This is the Sense and Substance of this Day's Epistle, which must be therefore particularly consider'd. Accordingly I begin,

First, With the great and principal thing which the Apostle here exhorts to, and that is, *To be Followers together of him*, and the other Apostles; *and to mark them who walk so, as they have them for Ensamples.* Examples you know have a very great Influence upon Mens Manners, either for the mending or marring of them; they often draw much stronger than Precepts, and most Men like Sheep are wont to go, not so much where they should, as where they see others go before them : which shews it to be a Matter of great consequence what Company we keep, and what Patterns we have before us. 'Twas wise Advice of a learned Heathen, that every one should propound to himself the best Patterns, not only of Vertue in general, but of each Vertue in particular; instancing in the Piety of *Socrates*, the Gravity of *Cato*, the Justice of *Aristides*, the Fidelity of *Regulus*, and the like; willing them to set these and other like good Examples before them, as their Copy to write after, and to transcribe their Vertues as a Rule of their Lives and Actions. This excellent Advice hath been improv'd by others since, who have directed to the reading the Lives of the most eminent and worthy Persons recorded in Sacred and Civil History, and making Observation of the best and worthiest Actions related of them, that by often thinking and remembring of them, they may be a Spur to our Emulation, and prick us forward to the Practice and Imitation of them.

But the Epistle for this Day propounds to us the best Patterns of this kind that can be set, to wit, the Lives and Actions of the Holy Apostles; whose Diligence in propagating the Gospel, Constancy to the Faith, and firm Adherence to the Principles and Practices of their Profession, notwithstanding all the Difficulties and Discouragements they met within it, are highly worthy to be follow'd by all Christians. But the foregoing Verses, mentioning the Harmony of the Apostles in Doctrine and Discipline, and
Hh 3 their

their exhorting all Christians, as far as they had attain'd, to walk by the same Rules without Discord or Dissension, implies the being Followers of them in these things; and not only so, but to *mark them that walk so, as ye have them for Ensamples*; following such as follow them, and learning by their Pattern to do likewise.

But why doth the Apostle so earnestly press their Example upon all their Followers? Why, that the next words will tell us, *For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping*: meaning, that there were many that walk'd so disorderly, and so contrary to the Christian Profession, that he could not think of them without Trouble, nor speak of them without Tears. And who were they? Why, the Apostle describes them in the following words:

1st, By their being Enemies of the Cross of Christ. Of this sort were the *Jews* and the *Greeks* in those days; the one denying, and the other deriding a crucify'd Saviour. So St. Paul tells us, that he *preach'd Christ crucify'd, to the Jews a Stumbling-Block, and to the Greeks Foolishness*. And such are the Deists and Infidels of our Age, who call the preaching of Christ by the name of Priestcraft, and ridicule Religion and all the Mysteries of the Gospel. These are truly *Enemies of the Cross of Christ*; and as the Apostle could not speak of those of old without weeping, so are these hardly to be mention'd without Tears, especially considering what he adds in the next words, *that their End is Destruction*: for there being no other Name given under Heaven, by which we can be sav'd, but the Name of Christ, who is the only Peace-maker between God and Man, how can any hope for Mercy or Pardon without him? Hence the Apostle asks the Question, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?* For this is to *trample under foot the Son of God*, who is alone able to help us, and to count the Blood of the Cross an unholy thing, which is only able to sanctify us. He that rejects the Remedy, must perish without Relief; and he that refuseth Redemption, must remain a Slave for ever. They that are Enemies to the Cross of Christ, can be no true Friends to themselves; yea, they are greater Enemies to their own Souls, than they can be to our Saviour, for they dash against the Rock of their Salvation, and must suffer an everlasting Shipwreck. These are the Persons that drew Tears from
the

the Apostle, of whom he had often told the Philippians, and here tells them even weeping. Again,

2dly, He describes them by their making their Belly their God, in the next words, *Whose God is their Belly*: that is, their Minds are chiefly set upon what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and give themselves up to the Sway of an unruly Appetite. Of this sort are all Gluttons and Epicures, who study all manner of Delicacies to pamper the Body, and make provision for the Lusts of the Flesh. These have their Heads and their Hearts busied about their Bellies, which they labour to serve and please more than God; but they that fare thus well here, will fare the worse for it hereafter, when these things come to be reckon'd for. The rich Glutton in the Gospel, that far'd deliciously every day, wanted at last a Cup of cold Water to cool his Tongue; and they who now with so much Care and Cost pamper their Body, shall e'er long pine with everlasting Hunger: And therefore our Saviour gave a strict Charge to his Followers, *to take heed that their Hearts be not overcharg'd with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, lest that day come upon them unawares*: Luke 21. 34. Again,

3dly, The Apostle describes these disorderly Walkers by their glorying in their Shame, in the same Verse, *Whose Glory is in their Shame*: that is, they glory in the Follies and Deformities of human Nature, and boast of those base and beastly Lusts, of which they ought to be asham'd. Of this sort are all sensual and voluptuous Persons, who are *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God*; who having cast off all Blushing, pride themselves in the rehearsing of their vile Debauches: Of these the Apostle speaks, *Eph. 4. 19. who being past Shame or feeling of any Remorse, gave themselves up to Lasciviousness, committing all Uncleanness with Greediness*. And too many such there are in our days, who have steel'd their Foreheads, and fear'd their Consciences beyond all sense of Evil, boasting of their Wickedness, and glorying in that which should overwhelm them with Shame and Sorrow: but all such Boasting is vain, and will end at last in the greatest Shame and Confusion of Face for ever. And because these could not weep for themselves, the Apostle here weeps for them, considering the fatal end of all such Folly and Boasting.

Lastly, These disorderly Walkers here are describ'd by their minding earthly things, in the same Verse, *Who mind earthly things*; that is, who cherish an inordinate Love of

this World, with a careless neglect of the other; their Hearts being so bent upon their worldly Interest, as to stick at no ways, how base or unjust soever, to compass their Ends. Of this kind are all Worldlings and covetous Persons, who fill their Heads with carking Cares and Fears about themselves, and harbour in their Hearts unjust Desires and Hankerings after the Goods of others: such as these serve Mammon more than God, and worship the Creature more than the Creator; for which reason Covetousness is often stil'd Idolatry, and covetous Persons are branded for Idolaters.

These are the bad Examples which the Apostle here laments with Tears, and wills all Christians not to follow, but avoid; *to have no Fellowship with such unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them*: Not to conform to such vile Practices of the World, nor to follow a Multitude, how great and numerous soever, to do Evil; all which look no higher than these earthly things, and lead only to Misery and Ruin.

But instead of them, he exhorts them to be Followers of him and the other Apostles, who set better Examples, and guide to higher and nobler things: for, as he goes on to tell them,

Our Conversation is in Heaven; that is, whereas others are so addicted to the Earth, as to mind only the Pleasures, Profits, and Honours of this World, we look higher than this World, and mind chiefly the things above: and this will be a better Pattern for you to imitate and to lead you to Heaven, than they who are glued to the Earth, and lie groveling upon it; *for our Conversation is in Heaven*. The word in the Original is *πολίτευμα*, which alludes to a City or Corporation, which hath many Privileges and Duties belonging to those that are free of it, tho they live at some distance from it: and so the Apostle's Meaning is, that tho they were born in this World, and liv'd in it, yet they belong'd to another, and were free Denizens of Heaven, which is often stil'd a City; and accordingly we converse and behave our selves here as those that are free of another City above, and belong to it. Hence we find them declaring, that *they look'd not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal*: 2 Cor. 4. 18. And elsewhere, *We walk by Faith, which is the Evidence of things not seen, and not by Sight, which reaches*

reaches only to present and perishing Objects. This is that wherein the Apostle would have us to be Followers of them, and likewise to mark them that do so, according to their Example; the better to take off our Hearts from an inordinate Love and Pursuit of earthly things, and to raise our Minds and Affections to the things of Heaven: for both which, they have left us both their Precept and their Pattern.

But the farther to recommend and enforce their Example upon us, of having, like them, our Conversation in Heaven, here are added two great Encouragements thereunto:

1. Because from *thence we also look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.* And,

2. Because when he comes, he will *change our vile Body that it may be fashion'd like unto his glorious Body, according to his Working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.* Of each of which something briefly: And,

1. The Apostle wills us to have our Conversation in Heaven, because *we also, as well as they, from thence look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.* That our Saviour Christ will come again from Heaven to judg the World at the last Day, we are often told in Holy Scripture: *This same Jesus* (saith the Angel to the Disciples) *which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as ye have seen him go into Heaven;* Acts 1. 11. He shall come from Heaven, attended with his mighty Angels, saith St. Paul, 2 Thess. 1. 7. And elsewhere, *He shall come with a Shout, and in the Clouds of Heaven.* Now the Expectation hereof set the Apostles a looking, longing, and preparing for his Coming, which they did by Heavenly-Mindedness, and all other Acts of a pious Life. So St. Paul tells us, Tit. 2. 12, 13. *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, hath appear'd to all Men; teaching us to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the Son of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ.* And herein we are call'd upon to imitate them, by having our Conversation in Heaven, from whence the Saviour comes, and whither we hope he will bring us: And the rather,

2. Because when he comes, he will *change our vile Body, that it may be fashion'd according to his glorious Body, &c.* meaning, that our crazy Bodies shall be then freed from all the Deformities and Infirmities that now belong to them, and

474 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

and be new fram'd and molded into the Fashion, Qualities, and Perfections of Christ's Body: that is,

(1.) Our vile, base, and abject Bodies shall be chang'd into glorious Bodies; so saith St. Paul, *It is sown in Dishonour, it is rais'd in Glory.*

(2.) Our natural, earthly, and fleshly Bodies shall be chang'd into spiritual and heavenly Bodies; so 'tis said, *It is sown a natural Body, it is rais'd a spiritual Body.* Again,

(3.) Our weak, frail, and passive Bodies shall be chang'd into active, vigorous, and powerful Bodies; so 'tis added, *It is sown in Weakness, it is rais'd in Power.* And,

Lastly, (4.) Our mortal, corruptible Bodies, shall be chang'd into immortal and incorruptible Bodies; so 'tis farther said, *It is sown in Corruption, it is rais'd in Incorruption; and this Corruptible must put on Incorruption, and this Mortal must put on Immortality.* In a word, both our Bodies and Souls shall be refin'd and rais'd to all those glorious Qualities and Perfections, to which they are capable of being advanc'd; and *when that which is Perfect is come, then all that is Imperfect shall be done away:* And all this shall be done for us by that Infinite and Almighty Power, *that is able to subdue all things to himself.*

Now if we look for these great things, as we undoubtedly may, what manner of Persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness? How frequently and firmly should our Minds and Meditations be fix'd on Heaven, from whence we expect the Coming of this Saviour, and with whom we hope to return and reign in Glory? This the Apostles did, and this they would have us to do, as also to observe and imitate those that walk by their Example.

Thus having shew'd the Drift and Scope of this Epistle, it remains, in the last place, that I press upon you the great Lesson that is taught in it; and that is, to be Followers of the Holy Apostles, and to set their Lives and Actions before you, as a Pattern for yours. To this end, read often the Scriptures of the New Testament, where their memorable Works and Actions are recorded, and bear them in mind, that you may have them always ready as occasion shall require; not that you are to be Followers of them, in doing the Miracles and other wonderful Works that they did, for that was a Power or Privilege peculiar

peculiar to them, granted for a while only for the Confirmation and Propagation of the Gospel; which being now well confirm'd and propagated, there can be no farther need or use of them, and therefore are not to be pray'd for or pretended to by us. Nor yet are we to be Followers of the Apostles in their Failings and Infirmities, some whereof were very great; as St. Peter's denying his Master, St. Paul's persecuting the Church, and the like, which are recorded in Scripture, not that we should follow, but forsake them: But that which we are call'd upon to imitate in them, is their Vertues, to follow their good Works, to have them before us as a Rule to govern our Actions, or as a Copy to transcribe in our Lives and Conversations, and to walk even as they walked. And indeed what better Precedents can we follow, than they who have not only chalk'd out our way for us by their Precepts, but likewise trod every Step of it before us by their Examples? To both which let us all learn to conform our Lives, and labour not to swerve from either in the whole Course of our Conversation. To which end,

2. Let us abandon the Ways and Works of all loose, profane, and profligate Persons; and such disorderly Walkers, as the Apostle could not speak of without weeping, let us not think of without abhorring and avoiding, for their End is Destruction, to which they lead themselves and all their Followers: we have seen their Description, being such, *whose God is their Belly, whose Glory is in their Shame, and who mind only earthly things.* In opposition whereunto, let us,

3. Especially imitate the Apostles in their holy and heavenly Conversation: for tho they liv'd upon the Earth, yet they declar'd that they belong'd to another Country, they were but Pilgrims and Strangers here, their Citizenship and Conversation was in Heaven; they were dead and crucify'd to this World, their Hearts were there, where their Treasure was, even in Heaven, from whence they expected their Saviour to come and take them to himself. And since we also look for the same, let us learn to do and to demean our selves likewise, especially considering the great and glorious Change that will then befall both our Body and Soul, from the many Miseries and Infirmities of this Earth, to all the Glories and Felicities of Heaven: To which God of his Mercy bring us all.



DISCOURSE LVII.

The GOSPEL for the Three and Twentieth
Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Mat. xxii. 15 — 23.

Then went the Pharisees, and took Counsel how they might intangle him in his Talk : and they sent unto him their Disciples, with the Herodians, saying, &c.

THESE Words begin the Gospel for this Day, in which we may observe the spiteful and malicious Designs of the *Pharisees* and others against our Saviour. The occasion of it was from a Parable related by him in the foregoing words, which so stung and nettled the *Pharisees* and others that were too plainly concern'd in it, that they went and consulted together how they might take some advantage against him, and draw him into their Snare ; for so the first words tell us, *They took Counsel how they might intangle him in his Talk*. The Parties sent to him upon this Errand to set upon him, were the Disciples of the *Pharisees*, with some of the *Herodians*, who began with him in this glozing and insinuating Language, saying, *Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in Truth, neither carest thou for any Man ;* meaning, that he was a free Speaker of his Mind, and would not disguise his Thoughts for the Fear or Flattery of any Man : which words they utter'd, not out of any Honour to him, but merely to encourage him to such a Freedom of Talk, that they might the better catch at something to make a Matter of Accusation against him. To which end they came to him with an earnest Desire to know his Mind freely and impartially, concerning the Matter of Tribute, a Point much debated among them at that time ; *Tell us therefore (say they) what thinkest thou, is it lawful to give Tribute to Cæsar or not ?* Which Question proceeded not from

from any honest Desire of Satisfaction, or of doing their Duty in it, but only from a crafty Design of intrapping him ; hoping for such an Answer, as might expose him either to the Rage of the *Jews*, or the Fury of the *Romans* : for the Persons that came to him with this ensnaring Question, were the *Pharisees* on the one hand, who were the chief Rulers among the *Jews*, and were against paying of Tribute, as thinking it a Token of Slavery to an usurp'd Power ; and the *Herodions* on the other, who favour'd the Domination of the *Romans* to the Oppression of the People. So that the Snare they had laid for him was this, If he had said, that 'twas lawful to pay Tribute, he had disgusted the *Jews*, and enrag'd the People against him, as one that approv'd the Yoke of the *Roman* Tyranny ; if he had said, 'twas not lawful to pay Tribute, they would have accus'd him as a Raisher of Sedition, and deliver'd him into the hands of the *Roman* Governor, to be us'd accordingly : by which they set upon him, as it were, with a two-edg'd Sword, that cut both ways, and wounded on every side.

But what Answer did our Saviour give them ? and how did he evade the Danger of their intended Treachery ? Why, he gave them not presently any direct Answer, but first upbraided their Malice and Hypocrisy ; so the next words tell us, *But Jesus perceiv'd their Wickedness, and said, why tempt ye me, ye Hypocrites ?* Why harbour ye such evil Thoughts in your Breasts, and hide your Malice under a Mask of Flattery and Friendship ? However, he that knew their Hearts, was able to discover and defeat their Designs. To which end,

He call'd for a Piece of the Coin, in which they were wont to pay the Tax, saying, *Shew me the Tribute-Mony.* Upon which, *they brought unto him a Penny ;* which was the fourth part of the Shekel of the Sanctuary, and half of an ordinary Shekel, the Tribute which God himself requir'd to be paid of every *Jew* yearly, for the use of the Temple, as we read *Exod. 30. 13.* which Tribute the *Romans* after sacrilegiously transfer'd to the Capitol. However that be, Christ looking upon the Penny, and observing the Image stamp'd upon it, ask'd them, *Whose is this Image and Superscription ?* they say unto him, *Cæsar's ;* then saith he unto them, *Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are Gods :* intimating to them, that their Coin would answer their Question ; for if *Cæsar's* Image be upon your current Coin,

'tis

'tis an Acknowledgment of his Supremacy; and your paying and receiving of it in Commerce, is a Token of Subjection to him as your Prince.

And since Tribute is ever due to the Supreme Power, you ought to own it to be his: *Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.* When they heard these Words, 'tis said that *they marvelled* at the Wisdom of his Answer, and left him, and went their way, admiring of him, and despairing of gaining any Advantage against him. This is the Sum of the Gospel for this Day; in which we learn,

First, The Treachery of the *Pharisees* and others in thus laying Designs of entrapping and intangling our Saviour, together with his great Prudence in confounding their Devices, and eluding all their Snares: of these enough hath been spoken already in the Gospel for the 17th Sunday after *Trinity*.

But the principal Lesson intended and taught us in this Gospel, is from our Saviour's Answer to those insidious Enquirers; which requires us to *render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's*: which being Matters of daily Use and Importance to us, must be a little insisted on, and inculcated upon us, as containing in them our Duty both to God and the King. For the better knowing and doing whereof, the words teach us,

First, That there are some particular Rights and Privileges belonging to *Cæsar*, or Sovereign Princes, which are call'd here, *The things that are Cæsar's*.

Secondly, That there are some peculiar Rights and Prerogatives that belong to God only, stil'd here, *The things that are God's*.

Thirdly, The Duty of all Christians with reference to both, and that is, to *render* the respective Rights and Dues to each.

First, As for the Rights and Privileges that belong to *Cæsar*, or Sovereign Princes, they are chiefly these three; Honour to their Persons, Obedience to their Laws, and Tribute for their necessary Occasions.

1st, Honour to their Persons is a plain Right belonging to Sovereign Princes, and is due to them by the Laws of God and Man. *St. Peter* hath coupled together the fearing of God, and honouring of the King; the one as the Cause and Motive of the other, and therefore both must go together:

gether: He that fears God will honour the King, and he that honours not the King hath cast off the Fear of God, whose Minister and Vicegerent he is; for God hath stamp'd his own Image and Superscription upon them, that all People may know to whom they belong: yea, God hath given them his own Name, *I have said ye are Gods*, to procure them the Reverence and Veneration of Mankind. He hath stil'd them his own Anointed, that Men may honour and demean themselves towards them accordingly, forbidding any to touch his Anointed with the Hand of Violence; for none can stretch out their Hand against the Lord's Anointed, and be guiltless. But beside this,

2dly, Obedience to their Laws is a plain Right of Sovereign Princes; for God hath stamp'd them too with his own Authority, to make them current, and to oblige all their Subjects. Hence St. Paul makes it necessary to *be subject not only for Wrath, or Fear of Punishment, but for Conscience sake*: And St. Peter wills us to *submit to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the King as Supreme, or to Governours that are sent by him*.

3dly, Tribute is another Right belonging to Sovereign Princes; and this is the main thing refer'd to here in our Text, of which our Saviour here convinc'd the *Pharisees* and *Herodians* by the Image and Superscription upon their Mony, where they saw *Cesar's* Face, and after that had not the Face to deny his Right, but own'd it to be his. The coining of Mony is the Prerogative of Sovereignty, and that requires both Homage and Tribute: the Image upon the Coin shews who is our Prince, and to whom these things are due; 'tis his Stamp that makes it current, and so to become the Regulation of our Contracts, and the Standard of our Civil Commerce; which cannot continue without Laws and Arms, to which Taxes and Tribute are sometimes necessary: for both the Dignity of the Prince, and the Safety of the People require Tribute, neither of which are to be upheld or preserv'd without it. And therefore our Saviour here and elsewhere makes it a Debt to *Cesar*, which may and ought to be discharg'd: and to this his Precept he added also his own Example; for he wrought a Miracle to pay Tribute for himself and *Peter*, when it was demanded of them, *lest peradventure* (saith he) *we should offend*; as we read, *Mat. 17. 27, 28*. So tender was he in this point of Tribute, though some unjustly accus'd him for forbidding to pay it, *Luke 23. 2*. St. Paul likewise

likewise urges the same, saying, *Render to all their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour*; Rom. 13. 7. These are the Rights of Sovereign Princes, or the things of *Cæsar*, which Christ and his Apostles require to be render'd to them, being absolutely necessary to the Support of Government, and the Defence of their Country. But as there are some Rights of Princes, call'd *The things that are Cæsar's*, which are to be *render'd* to them, of which kind, we see, are Honour, Obedience, and Tribute; so there are,

Secondly, Some peculiar incommunicable Rights and Privileges, that belong to God only, call'd therefore *The things that are God's*. Of this kind are all Religious Worship or Divine Honour, together with a due Reverence and Regard to all sacred things, that relate or belong to God; as his Ministers, his House, his Day, his Revenues, and the like: all which are properly his, and must be regarded as such.

1st, I say, All Religious Worship belongs to God, and must be render'd to him and no other: so our Saviour hath given us an express Charge, saying, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*; Matth. 4. 10. Divine and Sovereign Honours are due to him by the Right of Creation: for he that made and upholds all things by the Word of his Power, may justly claim a peculiar Honour and Homage to be paid to him upon that account; the great Landlord and Proprietor of the World well may and ought to have a particular Service and Acknowledgment due to him, as a high Rent for all his Blessings: and this consists in adoring his infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness to all his Creatures, in praying to him for all that we want, and in praising of him for all that we receive. This is a Tribute we all owe to the Supreme Being, 'tis peculiar to him, and to be paid to none else; in a word, 'tis one of the things of God that must be render'd to him.

2dly, Another is a due Reverence and Regard to all sacred things, that relate and appertain unto God; which is likewise to be carefully render'd to him. There are some Persons and Things that are set apart from all common and ordinary Uses, and consecrated to Holy and Divine Purposes; all which are said to be Holy unto the Lord, for the Relation they bear to him as his, and must be respected accordingly: of this kind are God's Ministers, God's House,
the

the Lord's Day, the Lord's Portion of our Substance, or Sacred Revenue appointed for the Maintenance of the Altar, and those that attend his Service; all which being *the Things of God*, are to be render'd to him, and to be respected for his sake. As,

(1.) The Ministers of the Gospel are said to be God's Ministers, set apart by his Order, and devoted to his Service, and therefore are to be look'd upon and treated as such: so St. Paul orders, *Let a Man so account of us as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God*; 1 Cor. 3. 1. To these God himself hath assign'd double Honour, saying, *Count them that labour among you in Word and Doctrine worthy of double Honour, and esteem them highly in Love for their Works*; 1 Tim. 5. 17. 1 Thess. 5. 13. though our licentious and degenerate Age scarce allow them single Honour, and instead of esteeming them highly, seek to bring them as low, and pour as much Contempt upon them as they can. But these will be repaid in due time; for God reckons himself honour'd in honouring his Ministers, as a Prince does in respecting his Ambassadors, and counts himself despised in despising his Ministers, as the Prince does in the like case: for *he that heareth you, heareth me*; (saith Christ) *and he that despiseth you, despiseth me*; and *he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me*. Luke 10. 16. And God himself hath declar'd, *They that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*; 1 Sam. 2. 30.

(2.) The Church or Temple is the House of God, and therefore to be reverenc'd and us'd accordingly: Christ calls the Temple his House, saying, *My House is a House of Prayer*; meaning, that it was set apart and consecrated for Holy Uses, and not to be desecrated or profan'd, by putting them to any other. Our Saviour never shew'd greater Indignation, than in whipping the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, saying, *My House is the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves*. And elsewhere, *make not my House a House of Merchandize*; John 2. 16. 'Tis God's own Command, *Ye shall reverence my Sanctuary*: by so doing we honour God, whose House it is, shewing a Regard to the Place where his Honour dwells; which being call'd by his Name, and devoted to his Service, we are to separate it from all common, and use it only for Divine Offices. So shall we render unto God the things that

Vol. IV. Part 2. 11 are

are God's; in doing otherwise we invade his House, and profane his Sanctuary.

(3.) The Lord's Day is another of the things of God, that is to be reverenc'd, and render'd to him; for God hath reserv'd and set apart that Portion of Time for himself, and stil'd it his: *The seventh Day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God*; and hath therefore given a strict Charge, to *remember that Day to keep it Holy*, by resting on it from all bodily Labours, and to apply it wholly to spiritual and religious Exercises. And because of the Relation and Dependence that there is of these Holy Times, and Holy Places upon one another, God hath join'd them together in one Command, saying, *Ye shall sanctify my Sabbath, and reverence my Sanctuary; I am the Lord*: Lev. 19. 30. By so doing we render unto God the things that are God's, and without it we falsify with God, by depriving him of both.

(4.) The tenth Part of our earthly Substance is another thing that is God's, and must therefore, by our Saviour's Rule, be render'd to him; for God, who gives all, hath reserv'd that part for himself, as a high Rent and Acknowledgment for all the rest, which he hath made payable to his Ministers, who attend his Service, and serve at his Altar; and to detain it from them either in whole or in part, is the heinous Sin of Sacrilege. Hence we find God himself complaining of some Mens *robbing of him in Tythes and Offerings*; and the denying or depriving him of his Part, brings a Curse instead of a Blessing upon all the remaining Parts of their Possessions: And therefore we are bid to *honour God with our Substance*, which is by a full and fair Payment of what is his, that we may find the Benefit and Comfort of all the rest. And this Right of God Almighty being confirm'd by human as well as by divine Laws, the withholding of it must be a Transgression of both; and they that do so, neither give to *Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, nor to *God the things that are God's*.

Thus I have briefly shew'd both *the things that are Cæsar's*, or the Rights of Sovereign Princes, *viz.* Honour, Obedience and Tribute; as also, *the things that are God's*, or the Rights of the great Sovereign and Ruler of the World, *viz.* Religious Worship, which is due to him only; and some Divine Honours and Respects that are to be paid to Sacred Persons and Things, for the Relation they bear to him. It remains only to put you in mind of a careful and con-

conscientious Discharge of these Duties, by rendring to each what of right belongs to them. And,

1st, Let me mind you of rendring unto *Cæsar*, or Sovereign Kings or Queens, the things that are theirs; that is, to honour their Persons as God's Vicegerents, with all the Expressions of inward and outward Honour, and to take care not to dishonour them in Thought, Word or Deed.

2^{dly}, Let us render unto them all due Submission and Obedience to their Laws, owning and yielding to their Authority for God's sake, and not listening to any Suggestions or Temptations to the contrary.

3^{dly}, Let us render Tribute unto them as Occasions shall require, which is here plainly commanded by our Saviour, and is necessary for the Safety both of Prince and People; the denying whereof to a Lawful and Pious Prince of these Kingdoms, hath brought many Miseries and heavy Burdens upon them ever since. But above all,

Lastly, Let us be careful of *rendring unto God the things that are God's*; that is, by giving to him Divine Worship, and to none beside him, and likewise by paying all due Respect and Reverence to those Persons, Times and Places that are consecrated to him; honouring his Ministers, hallowing his Sabbath, and reverencing his Sanctuary. And among the rest, let us not forget or neglect to render him that Sacred Part of our Substance, which he hath reserv'd and appropriated to his Service; remembering the sad Fate of *Ananias* and *Saphira*, who for withholding and alienating part of the Price of their consecrated Substance, were both smitten to Death by a sudden Stroke of Divine Vengeance: as we may read, *Acts* 5. 1, 2.

In a word, by *rendring unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, we may live quietly and easily here; and by *rendring unto God the things that are God's*, we shall live happily for ever hereafter: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE LVIII.

The EPISTLE for the Four and Twentieth
Sunday after *Trinity*.

Coloff. i. 3—13.

We give Thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your Faith in Christ Jesus, and of the Love that ye have to all the Saints, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches God to absolve his People from their Offences, that through his bountiful Goodness they may all be deliver'd from the Bands of those Sins, which by their Frailty they have committed: which things cannot better be obtain'd than by frequent and fervent Prayer. And therefore the Apostle in this Epistle puts up his hearty Prayers in the behalf of the *Colossians*, that all Sin might decay and die in them, and that all the Graces of the Spirit might grow and flourish among them.

St. Paul had never personally preach'd the Gospel to these *Colossians*, no nor so much as been among them; for he tells us, *Coap. 2. ver. 1.* that they were some of them that *had not seen his Face in the Flesh*. But *Epaphras*, his Fellow-Servant and Fellow-Prisoner at *Rome*, had planted a Church among them, and converted many to the Faith; and by him it was that he sent this Epistle to them, to encourage and confirm them in the Faith, to which the other had converted them.

So that the Epistle for the Day contains St. Paul's Prayer in the behalf of these *Colossians*; which being much the same with that which he put up in the behalf of the *Philippians*, mention'd in the Epistle for the 22d Sunday after *Trinity*, I shall not need to repeat what is there treated of, but only consider what is here added to it. It consists partly of Thanksgivings for Mercies, which they had already receiv'd;

Epistle for the 24th Sunday after Trinity. 485

ceiv'd; and partly of Supplications for farther Blessings to be bestow'd upon them: both which being intermingled together, I shall consider them as they are here related.

The Epistle begins with Thanksgiving, in these words; *We give Thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Where, by giving of Thanks, we are to understand not only an inward Sense and Remembrance of Mercies receiv'd, but likewise an outward and open Acknowledgment of them, accompany'd with hearty Desires and Endeavours of making all possible Returns and Requitall for them. The Object, to whom this Thanksgiving was made, was God, the Author of all Mercies, both spiritual and temporal, and the Almighty Donor of all our Blessings; for every good Gift, and every perfect Gift (saith St. James) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights: Jam. 1. 17. who is here farther stil'd, *The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; by whose Merits and Mediation all Divine Blessings are deriv'd to us. To this his giving of Thanks, the Apostle adds his praying always for them, since he heard of their Faith in Christ Jesus: This he heard from Epaphras, a Disciple of his, who was the main Instrument of preaching and planting the Gospel among them, as we shall find after. So that the

1st Thing that the Apostle here praises God for, and prays for the Continuance of, in the behalf of these *Colossians*, was their embracing of Christianity, or receiving the Christian Faith; which was an inestimable Blessing to them, who were before in a State of Heathenism and Infidelity: and so being out of the Church, they were *without God, without Christ, and without Hope in the World.* Whereas, by receiving the Gospel, they were receiv'd into the Favour of God, and by the Merits of Christ had well-grounded Hopes of Salvation.

2dly, Another thing, for which he thanks God in them, was *the Love that they had to all the Saints*; which appear'd by their contributing to their Necessities, and by aiding and comforting them in all their Distresses: they prov'd their Faith to be sound and sincere, by its working by Love, and abounding in all the Acts of Mercy and Charity.

3dly, He thanks God for *the Hope that was laid up for them in Heaven*; ver. 5. that is, for the lively Hope of an Inheritance immortal, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for them; of which they heard by

the Word of the Truth of the Gospel: meaning, that they had an Assurance hereof by the Doctrine of the Gospel, which they had heard and receiv'd; *for Faith comes by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*: which Word of Truth is come not to them only, but to all the World, where the Gospel is preach'd; for the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, hath appear'd to all Men.

Lastly, He thanks God for the *good Fruits it brought forth in the World*, since the Publication of it, *as it did also in these Colossians, since the Day they heard of it, and knew the Word of God in Truth*: Which good Fruits serv'd to adorn the Gospel that was preach'd to them, and will redound to their Account in the Day of Christ.

These are the chief things for which the Apostle here gives God Thanks in the behalf of the *Colossians*, which tending so much to their present and future Welfare, were highly thank-worthy. This, his praising of God for them, they learned of Epaphras, *a dear Fellow-Servant of St. Paul's, and a faithful Minister of theirs, who also declared unto the Apostle their Love in the Spirit, and the entire Affection they bore unto him; for which cause we also (saith he) since the Day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you.* And this will lead me from the Subject-matter of his Praises and Thanksgivings for them,

Secondly, To the Matter of his Prayers and Supplications in their behalf: And the first Thing he pray'd for, or desir'd for them, was *that they might be filled with the Knowledge of his Will in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding*; ver. 9. Now though Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding are oftentimes taken promiscuously, to signify one and the same thing; yet here and elsewhere in Holy Scripture they have different Senses, and may be thus distinguish'd: Knowledge signifies the bare Notion or Speculation of any Matter or Thing; Wisdom is a practical Knowledge, and implies the doing of what we know; Understanding is an experimental Knowledge, or feeling the Truth of what we know. All these the Apostle here desires for these *Colossians*, with reference to the Will of God, and all Divine Truths.

As, (1.) He desires that they may be filled with the *Knowledge of God's Will*; that is, that they may have a right Notion of the things that God requires, without being misled by Ignorance, or mistaken by Error. Of our selves we are blind, and know nothing as we ought: *The natural Man (saith the Apostle) discerns not the things of God, neither*

ther can be, because they are spiritually discerned; 1 Cor. 2. 14. Hence we find *David* often praying, that God would teach him his Statutes, and help him to know his Testimonies; to open his Eyes, that he might behold the wondrous things of his Law. And here *St. Paul* prays for the *Colossians*, that they may be filled with Knowledge, so as to understand things aright, and to know the Truth as it is in *Jesus*.

Next, The Apostle prays, that their Knowledge may be accompany'd with Wisdom, that is, with the Practice of what they know, which is a practical Knowledge in all Wisdom: An empty Notion of Divine Truths, that swims only in the Brain, without sinking into the Heart, and flowing into good Works, can be of no Use or Benefit to any; 'tis acting according to our Knowledge, that gives it all its Worth and Efficacy. And therefore *St. James* asks the Question, *Who is a wise Man, and endowed with Knowledge among you?* And then, by way of Answer, bids them to shew out of a good Conversation his Works with Meekness of Wisdom; Jam. 3. 13. All true Christian Knowledge must be attended with Practice, in which consists true Wisdom; and without that, all Pretences to it do but betray the greater Folly.

Furthermore, the Apostle prays in their behalf for *spiritual Understanding*; that is, for such an experimental Knowledge of the things of God, that they may find and feel within them the Truth of them: for Experience is the best Knowledge, and they that have that have the best Seal and Assurance of Divine Truths.

These things require and well deserve our most affectionate Prayers, join'd with our utmost Endeavours for the obtaining of them, both for our selves and others. *Solomon*, who best knew the Worth and Way of attaining of them, hath will'd us to cry for Knowledge, and to lift up our voice for Understanding, to search for them as for Silver, and to dig for them as for hidden Treasure; Prov. 2. And being such precious and invaluable Blessings, the Apostle thought he could not do better for these *Colossians*, than to pray, that they might be fill'd with the Knowledge of God in all Wisdom, and spiritual Understanding. The first thing he here petitions for them,

The second is, that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; that is, either that they might walk as becometh the Servants of the Lord, in all Humility, Love,

and Obedience to him ; which things as they are pleasing to all earthly Masters, so are they much more so to our great Lord and Master in Heaven : or else, that they might walk worthy of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they had receiv'd, by suiting their Lives to the Rules and Precepts of it ; which is of all things most pleasing and acceptable to him : Otherwise, their embracing the Gospel would be so far from pleasing, that it would the more incense and heighten his Displeasure ; for *better had it been (saith St. Peter) not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after the knowing it, to turn away from the Holy Commandment.* And the sad Fate of *Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum*, who had receiv'd the Gospel of Christ, would be far heavier for their Contempt of it, than that of *Tyre and Sydon*, and other barbarous Countries that never heard it. For which the Apostle here prays for the *Colossians*, that they might walk so, that all their Ways may be pleasing unto God, which is a good Prayer for all Christians.

3ly, Another thing he prays for them, is, that they might be *fruitful in every good Work, and increasing in the Knowledg of God.* For Christianity consists not in barren and empty Speculations, that like a wither'd Tree afford no Fruit, but in doing good Works ; and like a fruitful Vine, or water'd Garden, brings forth Fruit in due season : nor doth it appear only in the Leaves and Blossoms of a specious Profession, but in the real Fruits of an universal Righteousness. Now the Fruits we are here directed to bring forth, are those of the Spirit, mention'd in *Gal. 5. 22.* in which all Christians should abound, for the setting forth the Glory of God, and promoting their own Salvation. The Tree in the Gospel was cut down for bearing no Fruit ; and they that are barren and unfruitful in the Knowledg of Christ, will find the same Fate, to be cut down and made the Fewel of everlasting Fire : which should make us, not only to pray, but endeavour to be *fruitful in every good Work.*

4ly, The Apostle farther prays for these *Colossians*, that they might be *strengthened with all Might, according to his glorious Power, unto all Patience, and Long-suffering, with Joyfulness ;* ver. 11. meaning, that they might be supplied with that spiritual Strength or Christian Fortitude, that might enable them to bear up under all the Afflictions and Persecutions of this Life ; not basely shrinking from the Cross of Christ, nor cowardly sinking under it, but by the
Grace

Grace of God to be able to stand in the evil Day, and having done all, to stand; being arm'd with Patience and Long-suffering, two of those Fruits of the Spirit, in which he would have them to abound; that being endu'd with Courage and the Power of God, they might despise the Frowns of Men, and rather rejoice than faint under Tribulations.

These are the things which the Apostle here pray'd for in the behalf of the *Colossians*, and are indeed fit Matter for our Prayers in the behalf of all Christians.

Lastly, the Epistle ends as it began, with giving thanks unto God the Father: withal mentioning another great and inestimable Favour and Privilege conferr'd upon us, very necessary to be explain'd and apply'd to us; and that is, *His making us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*: by which we are to understand his fitting of us here, for a blest Estate of endless Glory and Happiness hereafter. Call'd here,

(1.) By the Name of an *Inheritance*, to signify the Title we have to it, as purchas'd for us by Jesus Christ; and the Tenure by which we hold it, which is not by a Term of Lives, or a Lease of Years, but by Inheritance for ever. Hence 'tis sometimes stil'd, *A Kingdom that cannot be mov'd, and an everlasting Kingdom*: At other times, an *Inheritance, undefil'd, incorruptible, that never faileth or fadeth away*; 1 Pet. I. 3. Again,

(2.) 'Tis call'd, the *Inheritance of the Saints*; to signify the Persons to whom it belongs, which is not to all, whether in the Church, or out of the Church; nor yet to those that live loose, careless and wicked Lives in it; but only to the *Saints*, that is, to such as are admitted into Christ's Holy Church, and continue true and faithful Members of it to their Lives end. For these it is, that *there is laid up a Crown of Glory, which God the righteous Judg shall give at the last day to all such as love and look for his Appearance*. Moreover,

(3.) 'Tis call'd the *Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, to signify the Glory and Splendor of that happy State: For as Darkness is made to represent a State of Horror and endless Misery, for which reason Hell is describ'd to be a Place of black and eternal Darkness, so Light is set to signify a Condition of Joy and Blessedness; and therefore Heaven is represented as a Place of bright and evershining Light.

But are we made meet Partakers of this Inheritance of the Saints in Light? Why, that is by the Graces of God's Holy Spirit wrought in us, which alone can fit us for Glory. They that delight in the Deeds of Darkness are no ways qualify'd for this Inheritance of the Saints in Light; their Portion will be to inherit Darkness, and to be shut up in the black Abyss of outer Darkness for evermore. 'Tis the Children of Light and of the Day that are alone qualify'd to inherit Light, and to inhabit for ever in the Regions of Bliss and Glory. What Concord hath Light with Darkness, or what Fellowship hath the carnal and sensual Mind with pure and refin'd Spirits? These things cannot agree or abide together, and consequently cannot be happy together.

Heaven is the Habitation of Holiness, where no unholy Thing or Person can dwell; *Without Holiness no Man can see the Lord*: and they that cannot see him, can never be happy in enjoying him. Holiness is not only a Condition, but a necessary Qualification for Happiness; and to be made meet Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints, we must be holy in all manner of Conversation and Godliness: for 'tis call'd the Inheritance among them that are sanctify'd; to signify that no un sanctify'd Person can have any share in it. Again,

Heaven is the Region of Purity, where no Defilement enters; and to fit our selves to come there, we must *cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh, and perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*. No unclean Person, or Whoremonger, or Adulterer, can be admitted into those undefil'd Regions; or if he could, he would find no Happiness there, where there is nothing to gratify his sensual Desires: we cannot see or enjoy God, unless we are like him; so the Apostle tells us, and he that hath this Hope, *must purify himself, even as he is pure*; 1 John 3. 2, 3. Moreover,

Heaven is the Mansion of Peace and Love, there is no Discord or Dissension there, but all the Inhabitants of those blessed Regions conspire together in perfect Peace and Amity; they all agree in the Worship of their Maker, and join with one Heart and one Voice in their incessant Hallelujahs. Now to be meet Partakers of these Joys, we must tune our Hearts to the same Harmony of Peace and Concord, subduing all that Pride, Passion, and Prejudice, that lead to Contention, and labouring for those gracious Qualities and Dispositions, that tend to the closest Union
of

of Hearts and Minds. In a word, the Way to be made meet Partakers of this Heavenly Inheritance, is by the daily Exercises of a Holy Life, and the constant Practice of Religion and Vertue.

Thus I have consider'd the Matter of the Apostle's Prayer and Praises in the behalf of the *Colossians*, which we see are chiefly for *spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ Jesus*. And that may teach us to make the same things the Subject of our Petitions and Thanksgivings, both for our selves and others.

Indeed Thankfulness is a Debt to be paid for all the Mercies we receive, temporal as well as spiritual; our Food and Raiment are thank-worthy, and we are bid every day to ask for our *daily Bread*: and the good things that relate to the Welfare of our Bodies here in this Life, exact from us a Tribute of Acknowledgment and Adoration. But the highest Acts of Gratitude are due for those spiritual Blessings that concern the Good of our Souls, and promote their eternal well-being in another World; such as the Means of Grace, and the Hopes of Glory, for both which we are to pray and praise God as well for others, as our selves.

This was the Apostle's Precept and Practice, to which let us learn to conform our selves, having a Sympathy and Fellow-feeling of one another's Joys and Sorrows, and tending as much as in us lies the Good and Welfare of one another; so shall we be made *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*: To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, &c.





DISCOURSE LIX.

The GOSPEL for the Four and Twentieth
Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. Matthew ix. 18 ——— 27.

While Jesus spake these things unto John's Disciples, behold, there came a certain Ruler, and worshipp'd him; saying, My Daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thine Hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and follow'd him, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives us an account of two Miracles wrought by our blessed Saviour; the one, the raising of a rich Man's Daughter from Death to Life; the other, the healing a poor Woman's Issue of Blood: the latter being in the Way to the former. In relating whereof we may observe,

First, The Time and Place when and where they were done, both which are set forth in the first Words of this Gospel: *While Jesus spake these things to John's Disciples*; that is, while he was in or near *Capernaum*, his own City, or the Place of his Residence, where the Disciples of *John* came to him with a Question, of which we read in the 14th Verse of this Chapter; *Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy Disciples fast not? Why doth John command us the Strictnesses and Severities of Fasting, and the Pharisees fast at least twice in the Week, when thy Disciples use no such Abstinencies or Austerities? To which Christ replies with another Question; Can the Children of the Bride-chamber fast whilst the Bridegroom is with them? But the Days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away, and then shall they fast. Is it fit that the chief Guests at a Wedding should fast or shew any Sadness, whilst the Marriage-Feast continues: that is, whilst I the Bridegroom am with them? But the time is coming,*
when

when I shall be gone from them, and then will the Time of fasting and mourning come; for Joy and Sorrow can no more suit together, than a new Piece of Cloth with an old Garment, or new Wine with old Bottles. And then it follows, *While Jesus spake these things to John's Disciples, behold, there came a certain Ruler, and worshipp'd him: The*

Second Thing to be here observ'd, viz. the Person that here addrest himself to our Saviour, and that was a certain Ruler; by whom we are to understand, one of the Sanhedrim or great Council among the Jews, of which there were two Ranks or Degrees, call'd the greater and the lesser Sanhedrim: the former consisted of 72 Judges, made up of the chief Priests, Scribes and Elders, who resided mostly in Jerusalem; the latter consisted of 23, who resided abroad in the several Cities, to decide the Differences that arose in them and the adjacent Countries. And of this latter sort was the Ruler here mention'd, who was one of the Consistory of that City, and dwelt there; of him it is said, that he came to Jesus, and fell down upon his Knees and worshipp'd him. This Ruler's Name (as St. Mark tells us) was Fairus, one of the Rulers of the Synagogue, who presided in the Jews particular Assemblies, and there pronounc'd what was right according to Law, and thereby ended Controversies, and punish'd Exorbitances. This Ruler when he saw Jesus, came to him and fell at his feet; Mark 5. 22.

But what was his Request to him? Why, he said unto him, *My Daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy Hand upon her, and she shall live.* St. Mark tells us that she was at the point of Death; meaning, that when he came from her she was gasping out her last Breath, and he concluded that when he spake to our Saviour, she must be then dead. But yet he had so firm a Persuasion and Confidence in Christ's Power, that if he would but come and lay his Hand upon her, she would recover and be restor'd to Life again: possibly he had heard or seen some of the Miracles that Christ had done of that kind, as the raising of *Lazarus*, after he had been dead four days; the bringing the Widow's Son at *Naim* to Life again, when he was carrying to his Grave; with many others, which begat in him a strong Faith, that he was able to do the same to his dying or dead Daughter. But what did our Saviour hereupon? Why, 'tis said, that *Jesus immediately arose and follow'd him,*

him, and so did his Disciples. He rais'd no Doubts, nor made any Delays, but went away presently with his Disciples to his House.

But as he was going to this Ruler's House, *Behold, a Woman which was diseas'd with an Issue of Blood twelve Years*, came where he was. St. Mark tells us, that this Woman had suffer'd many things of many Physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better'd, but rather grew worse; *Mark 5. 26.* Her Disease had run so long, that the Flux of Blood could not be stopt by any Methods of Art or Physick: which made her upon the hearing of Jesus, and the Cures wrought by him, betake her self to him. But how did she apply her self to him, when she came? Why, she made no formal Address to him by way of Petition or Word of Mouth, but took opportunity of the Throng or Press wherein he was, to go behind him and touch the Hem of his Garment; *For she said within her self, if I may but touch his Garment, I shall be whole.* Upon which St. Mark tells us, that the Fountain of her Blood was straightway dried up, and she felt in her Body, that she was heal'd of that Plague.

This Woman's Distemper being a legal Uncleanness, she thought it might be heal'd or done away by touching the Fringe of that Garment, which God commanded the Jews to wear, *Numb. 15.* and that made her come by Stealth behind our Saviour, and touch the Fringe of his Garment. Or else, her Faith in Christ was so strong, as to be fully persuaded, that the Touch of any thing about him was sufficient to heal her: and so indeed it prov'd, for our Saviour was so well pleas'd with the Strength of her Faith, that he turn'd about, and seeing her, said unto her, *Daughter, Be of good Comfort, thy Faith hath made thee whole.* St. Mark and St. Luke have added another Passage to this Relation, to wit, that upon the Woman's touching his Garment, Jesus immediately knew in himself, that Virtue had gone out of him; and turning about in the Press, ask'd, *Who hath touch'd me?* To which the Disciples reply'd, *Thou seest the Multitude thronging about thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?* The Woman seeing Jesus look about, and knowing what was done in her, came fearing and trembling, and fell down before him, and told him all the Truth. Upon which he said unto her, *Daughter, thy Faith hath made thee whole, go in Peace, and be whole of thy Plague;* *Mark 5. 30—35.* By which it appear'd, that his Gar-

ment

ment was fanative, and his Touch medicinal, for *the Woman was made whole from that Hour*. And this may encourage us in all Exigencies to go to this great Physician, who is able so easily to heal all the Maladies both of Soul and Body.

This Miracle our Saviour did in his Way to the Ruler's House, where as he was going, there came certain Persons from the Ruler's House, who said unto him, *Thy Daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any farther*: Jesus hearing these Words, and fearing that the Ruler's Faith might fail, said unto him, *Be not afraid, only believe*; which made him go on heavily indeed for the Death of his Child, but chearfully enough for the Hopes he had in our Saviour.

When Jesus came to the Ruler's House, 'tis said, he saw *the Minstrels, and the People making a noise*: These Minstrels were certain Persons hired to play mournful Tunes at Funerals, according to the Custom of the Jews and other Nations; of which we read in 2 Chron. 35. 25. where Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and the singing Men and singing Women spake of Josiah in their Lamentations to this day; that is, they sang Threnes or mournful Songs, compos'd for Lamentation on such sad Occasions, which is there said to be *made an Ordinance in Israel*.

According to this Custom and Constitution, our Saviour found these Minstrels in the Ruler's House, playing their mournful Ditties, the People making a noise with weeping and wailing about them; all things preparing with Musick and other Solemnities for the Funeral: when Christ came in, he said unto them, *Give place*, or as St. Mark hath it, *Why make ye such ado, and weep, the Maid is not dead, but sleepeth*? meaning, that he would make her Death to be but a Sleep, from whence she should rise, as one that waketh out of Sleep. But the People instead of believing, *laugh'd him to scorn*.

But when the People were put forth, he took the Father and Mother of the Damsel, with his three Disciples, Peter, James and John, and went in where she lay; and coming to her as one that was asleep, he took her by the Hand, and the Maid arose: she awak'd as one out of sleep, came to Life again, and rose up. St. Mark relates it, that Christ beside taking her by the Hand utter'd these Words, *Talitha Cumi*, which is being interpreted, *Damsel, I say unto thee arise*; and adds, *that the Damsel straightway arose and walk'd*. These

These are the two Miracles related in the Gospel for this Day, the one upon a diseas'd Woman, the other upon a departed Maid ; and both of them were very great, and far exceeding all the Powers of Art and Nature : For which reason, 'tis added in the Close, that the *Fame thereof went abroad into all that Land*. For tho he charg'd them to conceal it, yet the Rumour of it spread far and near throughout that Country. St. *Mark* adds, that they were *astonish'd with a great Astonishment* ; and elsewhere 'tis said upon the like Occasions, that they marvell'd greatly, and glorify'd God : the two usual Effects of his Miracles, to wit, Admiration and Adoration, both which suit very well with the Miracles related to us this Day.

For the First, we may justly raise our Wonder to the highest Pitch of Admiration, and with these in the Text be astonish'd with a great Astonishment, at such amazing Effects of the Divine Power. And indeed if we consider the Greatness of the Works done by him, the Easiness of his doing of them, the Usefulness of them to Mankind, together with the End and Extent of them, we shall find Reason enough to fill us with Admiration and Astonishment.

1st, I say the stupendous Greatness and Number of our Saviour's Miracles may fill us with Wonder and Amazement. As Christ was a Prophet above all other Prophets, so were his Miracles far above all other Miracles ; no Man ever did the mighty Works that he did, even in the Judgment of his Enemies ; nor did all or any that were before him, ever come near him in the Greatness of the miraculous Acts done by him. The Jews of old had a Saying, that all past Miracles should be nothing in comparison of the Miracles of the Messias. And indeed if we compare the Miracles of the Prophets, and all that went before him, they are not fit to be nam'd with those that were done by our Saviour ; and if the Jews were not blinded by Prejudice, they might from thence reasonably have taken him for the true Messias : for there was no part of the Creation that afforded not some Instance or other of his Divine Power. He had (as a Father hath observ'd) the Blessed Angels at his Call, and the damned Spirits subject to his Will ; he commanded the Seas and the Winds, and they obey'd him ; he guided the Fishes in the Sea which way he pleas'd, and did many Wonders in the Deep. As for Men, who were his more peculiar Charge, he provided against their
Necessities,

Necessities, Miseries and Infirmities; he fed them by Miracle, when their Provisions fail'd; he heal'd them by Miracle, when their Diseases were otherwise incurable. He cured Blindness from the Birth, remov'd inveterate Dropsies, Palsies and Leprosies; and staunch'd Issues of Blood, which could be no otherwise stopt: yea, he rais'd Persons from the Dead, after they had lain some time in the Grave. The time would fail me to reckon up the many wonderful Works of our Saviour; of which St. John in a proverbial Expression tells us, that if they were all put together, *the whole World could not contain the Books that should be written.*

John 21. 25. Again,

2ly, The Manner and Easiness of his doing those mighty Works, may fill us with Astonishment at the Greatness of his Power; for whatsoever any Man else did of this kind, he did it by a borrow'd and limited Power, which he could neither communicate to others, nor exercise himself, but by God's special Appointment: but Christ did all by his own inherent Power, *the Fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him*, by which he did what he pleas'd, how he pleas'd, and when he pleas'd, either by himself or by others; being determin'd by nothing, but by his own Wisdom and Goodness. This I find enlarg'd upon by a Reverend Father of our Church, who tells us, that Christ did all his Miracles, even that of raising the Dead to Life again, with the greatest ease, and without the least difficulty: for he effected these things as well absent as present, as well in an instant, as by degrees; for he did them by the applying of his Hand, by the Touch of his Garment, by the Word of his Mouth, by the Motion of his Will; to shew that any Means would serve, that no Means were necessary, that all Times and Places were alike to the sovereign Virtue he employ'd in doing his mighty Works. Moreover,

3ly, The great Benefit and Usefulness of his Miracles to Mankind are sufficient to excite, not only Wonder, but the greatest Thankfulness. For his Miracles were all healing and medicinal, design'd either to give Life or restore it, to promote the Good of all Men, and to prevent the Hurt or Evil of any: and therefore we find, when two of his Disciples in a great Rage urg'd him to work a Miracle, in calling for *Fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritans*, he gave them a sharp Rebuke, saying, *Ye know not what Spirits ye are of; for the Son of Man is come not to destroy Mens*

498 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the
Lives, but to save them. He went up and down still doing
good to the Bodies and Souls of Men, and always exerted
his Divine Power for the Welfare and Happiness of both.
To all which if we add,

Lastly, The Extent of his Miracles, or that general In-
fluence and Benefit that all Ages and Places have receiv'd
by them ever since; we shall find abundant cause both to
admire his Power, and to adore his Person.

And this will lead me to the Use and Application of this
Discourse, which will be to confirm our Faith in our Blessed
Saviour as the true Messiah, and to persuade us all to re-
ceive his Doctrine, which stands confirm'd by so many Mi-
racles. This Use we are the rather to make of it, because
of the many late Attempts of some to shake our Faith or
Belief of both. He must be a great stranger to the World,
who does not see what great Endeavours are using to wea-
ken the Credit of Christ's Doctrine and Miracles, and
thereby to undermine the whole Christian Religion. How
far these have prevail'd upon too many, whose bad Lives
have made it their Interest and Wish that Christ's Doc-
trine should not be true, is easily apparent to any ordinary
Observer. It is a vicious World we live in; and always the
more Vice, the more Unbelief: which may make us think
and fear, that we are not far from that time, of which
Christ himself spake; *When the Son of Man cometh, shall he
find Faith upon Earth?* How far it hath fail'd of late years
among us, and how much it is still sinking, is a Subject
very sad to consider: so that instead of building Men up in
their holy Faith, and carrying on the Work and Business of
a Christian Life, we are forc'd to combat the Atheists and
the Deists, who are still pecking at the Foundation. How-
ever, if these Mens Lusts would give them any time to
consider, they must needs see such a *Demonstration of the
Spirit and Power* in Christ's Doctrine and Miracles, as is
sufficient to open the eyes of any, that do not wilfully
shut them against the Truth, and to convince all that are
not resolv'd against Conviction. *Pertinacia nullum dedit
Remedium Deus*, there is no Remedy for Obstinacy; and
they must perish without redress, who persist in their Infi-
delity without Repentance. Let us then consider these
things in time, that we be not carry'd away with the Er-
ror of the Wicked. Remember the heavy Doom de-
nounc'd against *Corazin* and *Bethsaida*, for despising the
Doctrine

Doctrine and Miracles of Christ. The barbarous Nations of Tyre and Sidon, that never heard of a Saviour, shall fare better at the Day of Judgment, than they who saw his mighty Works and believ'd not. And Capernaum, the place of Christ's Residence, where many of his Miracles were done, being thereby lifted up to Heaven in the height of their Privileges, will yet for their Unbelief and Impenitence be sunk so much the deeper in Hell. Wherefore let us *take heed lest there be in any of us an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God; but rather let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering: so shall we receive at last the End of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls; which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, &c.*



DISCOURSE LX.

The EPISTLE for the Five and Twentieth Sunday after *Trinity*.

Jer. xxiii. 5—9.

Behold the Days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute Judgment and Justice in the Earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. And this is his Name whereby he shall be call'd, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, &c.

THESE Words containing both a Prophecy and a Promise of the Messiah, are selected for the Epistle for this Day, and order'd by the Church to be always read upon the Sunday next before Advent, to preserve the Memory of his Coming, and to prepare for his Reception. Accordingly,

The Collect for the Day beseeches God to *stir up the Hearts of his faithful People, to be ready for him, that*

they plenteously bringing forth the Fruit of good Works, may of him be plenteously rewarded. To which end,

The Epistle begins with a Prediction of him in these words; *Behold! the Days come (saith the Lord) that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, &c.*

The word *Ecce, Behold*, in the front of them, is never used but to usher in some matter of great weight and importance, and evermore denotes the Dignity and seeming Difficulty of what comes after it; which is therefore to be receiv'd with the greater Attention and Veneration, as this most especially is. In the following words we have,

First, A Promise of the Messiah, together with the Stock from which he was to descend: *The Days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch.*

Secondly, We have a Description of his Person and Government: *He shall reign as a King and prosper, and shall execute Judgment and Justice in the Earth.*

Thirdly, The Benefit and Security that should then accrue to his People: *In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.*

Lastly, The Name whereby he should be call'd; and that is, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Of each of these briefly. And,

First, Of the Promise of the Messias, together with the Lineage or Stock from whence he descended: *Behold! the Days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch.* Where by the Days shall come, we are to understand the latter Days, or the last Age of the World, call'd in Scripture *the last Days*, or *the latter Times*; which were the Days or Age of the Messias, into which we are fallen. St. Peter speaking of him, saith, *He was manifested in the last days*, 1 Pet. 1. 5. And St. John to the same purpose, *Little Children, it is the last Time*; 1 John 2. 18.

But because some may ask with the Scoffers of old, *Where is the Promise of his Coming?* I shall, beside this of our Text, point out some of the Prophecies extant in the Old Testament concerning it. In the Prophecy of Jacob we read of *Shiloh's* coming, together with the Time appointed for it, which was at the Scepter's departing from Judah; Gen. 49. 10. and that came to pass in the days of Herod. Moses told the Israelites, that God would raise up a Prophet, not only like unto, but greater than he, and to him they should hearken;

hearken; Deut. 18. 18. And Christ (as the Gospel for this Day informs us) was own'd and receiv'd as such. The Prophet *Haggai* declar'd at the building of the second Temple, that this great Prophet should come and fill that House with his Presence; *Hag.* 2. 7. And the Prophet *Malachi*, that the Lord whom they sought would suddenly come to his Temple; *Mal.* 3. 1. Both which were shortly after fulfill'd in Christ's being presented in the Temple, and there instructing his Disciples in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.

These, and many more that might be quoted, are plain Prophecies of the Messiah, whom God by the Prophet *Jeremy* here promis'd to raise up for the Salvation of Mankind.

But the Prophet here, to the Promise of his Coming, adds the Stock or Lineage from whence he descended, and that was from the Family of *David*; *I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch*. By which it appears, that the Messiah was to be the Seed and Offspring of *David*; and therefore he is often mention'd in Scripture as deriving his Pedegree from that Line, being frequently stil'd, *the Son of David*. The Prophet *Isaiah* foretold, that *there should come forth a Rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of its Root*; *Isa.* 11. 1. Which is by all Interpreters understood of Christ, call'd therefore in the Prophecy of *Zechary*, *The Man whose Name is the BRANCH*, *Zech.* 6. 12. Accordingly we find *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke*, in reckoning his Genealogy, both deriving his Pedegree from the Lineage of *David*; making *Joseph* his reputed Father, and *Mary* his Mother, to descend from that Stock: *Mat.* 1. *Luke* 24. From his Pedegree, so carefully recorded in Scripture, proceed we,

Secondly, To the Description of his Person and Government, in these words; *As a King shall he reign and prosper, and shall execute Judgment and Justice upon Earth*. Where three things are prophesied of the Messiah:

- (1.) That he should be a King to reign over his People.
- (2.) That his Reign should be prosperous. And,
- (3.) That his Reign should be just and righteous, being ever ready to execute Judgment and Justice upon the Earth.

(1.) That the Messiah was to be a King, and that he actually reign'd over *Israel*, is evident by the History both of the Old and New Testament. *Zechary* in his Prophecy

502 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the
of our Saviour expressly stiles him King of *Israel*, Chap. 9. 9. *Rejoice, O Daughter of Zion; and shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee!* that is, to the House of *Israel*, or the People of the Jews. The Prophet *Isaiah* declares, that *the Government was to be on his shoulders*, calling him, *The Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*; Isa. 9. 6, 7. And nothing is more common in all the Prophets, than to stile the *Messias the Lord of Hosts*, and *the King of Israel*. And the same is the frequent Language of the New Testament: *Where is he that is born King of the Jews?* say the Wisemen upon the Birth of Christ, *Mat. 2. 2.* *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel*; said *Nathaniel*, *John 1. 49.* *Pilate* asking him, *Art thou a King then?* he answer'd, *Thou sayest it*: meaning, that he said true, for so he was.

(2.) And as he reign'd as a King, so was his Reign prosperous; *He shall reign and prosper*. Which is a Prophecy of the Glory and Extent of his Kingdom, that it should reach over the World, and extend to all the Ends of the Earth. *Of the Increase of his Government and Peace, there shall be no end*, saith the Prophet *Isaiah: The Zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform it*, Chap. 9. 8. And elsewhere, that the Pleasure of the Lord should so prosper in his hand, that his Kingdom should reach unto all Parts, and his Dominion to all Ages.

(3.) And as he should reign and prosper, so should he execute Judgment and Justice in the Earth: that is, his Reign should be not only glorious, but just and righteous; doing Right to all, and equally distributing both Rewards and Punishments. So the Prophet *Isaiah* foretold, that he should sit upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order and to establish it with Judgment and Justice; Isa. 9. 8.

All which things are to be understood, not of any temporal Kingdom, as if he were to reign here in the transitory Glory and Splendor of an earthly Monarch; but of a spiritual Kingdom, or a Kingdom within us, whereby he reigns in our Hearts by Faith, and governs us by his holy Spirit. This he told his Disciples himself, when suing to him for earthly Profits and Preferments, he reply'd to them, that his Kingdom was not of this World, but his Business was to purchase and prepare for them a better; and to that end he came not so much to make them great as good, and by Grace to advance them to Glory, to triumph
over

over the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and to make all their Foes their Footstool. This the Psalmist foretold of his Kingdom, that *a Scepter of Righteousness was to be the Scepter of his Kingdom*, Psal. 45. 62. which the Apostle applies to the just Exercise of his Regal Power, in succouring the Faithful, and punishing the obdurate Resisters of his Will; *Heb. 1. 8.* In this sense it is that he is said to *reign as a King*, his Empire being not so much over the Bodies, as the Souls of Men, where he rules by his holy Spirit, and subdues all his and our Enemies; in which he is likewise said to *prosper*, all Nations coming in, and being made subject to him: *His Dominion is from Sea to Sea, and his Power reaches over all Lands.* In a word, he reigns over all the Princes and Potentates of the Earth, who veil their Crowns to his Cross, and submit their Scepters to his Scepter of Righteousness: for which reason he is stil'd *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*; all inferiour Princes reigning by his Power, and decreeing Justice by his Authority: So that *all the Help that is done upon Earth, he doth it himself.* And this will lead me to consider,

Thirdly, The great Blessings that accrue by the Coming of the Messias, and they are set forth in the next words; *In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.* Salvation and Peace are two of the greatest Blessings that can befall a People; they relate to the Welfare both of Body and Soul, and that not only in the Life that now is, but in that which is to come. To live in Peace and Safety, is the great Comfort and Happiness of this Life; and to be sav'd at last, is the Joy and Blessedness of the next: both these are here prophesied and promis'd at the Coming of the Messias, and particularly to the Tribe of *Judah* and the House of *Israel*, from both which he descended. Accordingly we read that Christ *came unto his own*; that is, to the *Jews*, who were of his own Tribe, Stock, and Nation, and of them he was sent *first to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, to reduce the wandering Jews, and bring Salvation to *Israel*; for he tells us, that *he came to seek, and to save them that were lost.* After which he enlarg'd his Favour, and extended it to the Gentiles also, according to the Prophecy, that *to him should the gathering of the People be*, and he should become *the Desire and Saviour of all Nations.*

But how is *Judah* said to be sav'd, and *Israel* to dwell in safety, when neither the one hath receiv'd Salvation, nor is the other restor'd to their own Country or Kingdom?

In answer to this, we must note, that there were some of the Jews and *Israelites*, that wilfully rejected Christ, *the righteous Branch of the House of David*; and said with them in the Parable, *We will not have this Man to reign over us*, and so obstinately thrust Salvation from them: These were they of whom St. *John* speaks, when he came unto his own, his own receiv'd him not; and 'tis no wonder if they miss of Mercy and Salvation, who wilfully refuse and cast it from them. But to as many as receiv'd him (saith the same Evangelist) to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believ'd in his Name; John 1. 12. They that came to him were sav'd by him; and for others that would not, it could not be expected. Besides, St. *Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, hath expounded *Judah* and *Israel* in a spiritual and mystical sense, for those that are truly and by Faith such: For he is not a Jew (saith he) that is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision, that is outward in the Flesh; but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the Heart: Rom. 2. 28. Neither are they all *Israel*, that are of *Israel*; Rom. 9. 6. where the Apostle makes the name of Jew or *Judah* to signify a Follower of the Faith of Abraham; and a true *Israelite* to be one like *Nathaniel*, in whose Spirit there is no Guile. Now 'tis to all, and only these, that the Promise of Peace and Salvation is here made: for such, by believing in Christ, as *Abraham* did, shall be sav'd by Faith, as he was; and being made righteous by this righteous Branch, shall grow up and live for ever in Peace and Safety. And this will lead me to the

Next thing propounded, viz. the Name or Title here given him; And this is his Name whereby he shall be call'd, the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. In the Prophecy of *Jacob*, he is stil'd *SHILOH*, that is, one that was to be sent. *Moses* calls him the great PROPHET, that was to reveal his Father's Will. In the Prophecy of *Isaiah*, he is call'd *EMMANUEL*, which signifies God with us: And here the Prophet *Jeremy* styles him, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; implying, that he is not only infinitely righteous in himself,

self, but that he communicates his Righteousness unto us. In the foregoing Verse he is describ'd by his Power, *reigning as a King*; and likewise by his Justice, *executing Judgment and Justice upon Earth*: both these are against us, who by our Sins and Offences have render'd our selves obnoxious to both, being liable to be crush'd by his Power, and condemn'd by his Justice. But the Name here given, the Lord our Righteousness, affords Help and Comfort to us in this Extremity: for tho we have no Righteousness of our own to plead, and so must be found guilty at the Bar of Divine Justice; yet having Christ's Righteousness apply'd and imparted to us, and so made ours, we may plead it as our own, and are thereby found innocent and clear'd at that Tribunal; yea, not only so, but we shall be justify'd and found righteous, by virtue of his Righteousness imputed to us. So the Apostle tells us, *He is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness, and Sanctification and Redemption*; 1 Cor. 1. 30. The word *Righteousness* implies, that he hath in all respects satisfy'd the Law, and appeas'd Divine Justice, by doing all that the Law requir'd, and suffering all that the Law inflicted on the Breakers of it: but then the word *O U R* being added to it, saying, the Lord *O U R* Righteousness, signify'd, that all that he did and suffer'd by way of Satisfaction to Divine Justice, was in our stead, and for our sake; and so we are justify'd by his Righteousness made ours, as a Debtor is releas'd upon his Surety's paying the Debt. So St. Paul speaks, *God made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him*; 2 Cor. 5. 21. By this means *Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kiss'd each other*: Psal. 85. 10. which made St. Paul challenge all our Ghostly Enemies, saying, *Who shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect? it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?* Rom. 8. And all this by Christ's being made *the Lord our Righteousness*; where 'tis express'd (as a Father hath observ'd) not in the Concrete, but in the Abstract, which very much heightens the signification: for 'tis not sufficient to say, he is righteous, and makes us so, but *he is Righteousness* it self, and hath made *us the Righteousness of God in him*. And what can the Wit of Man devise, or the Heart of Man desire more comfortable, than to have the Son of God and his Righteousness made ours? by which we appear not only righteous before

God,

God, but even Righteousness it self: which shews the Sense and Reason of this Name, *The Lord our Righteousness*.

To all which the Prophet adds or infers one memorable Passage more, in these words: *Therefore behold the Days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, who brought up the Children of Israel out of the Land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth, who brought up, and who led the Seed of the House of Israel out of the North Country, and from all Countries whither I had driven them, and they shall dwell in their own Land.* Where God declares, that he will be no more call'd their Deliverer out of Egypt, because he would vouchsafe them a greater Deliverance from Babylon; that he would rescue them from Captivity, and the Miseries they endur'd in other Countries, and restore them safely to their own Land: which Deliverance was a Type or Emblem of a far greater Deliverance from more deadly Enemies, even from Sin and Satan, from Death and Hell, and restoring us to a better, that is a heavenly Country: All which things are signify'd by the name here given to the Messias, *The Lord our Righteousness*.

This is the Substance of this Prophecy appointed for this Day's Epistle; the Use that we are to make of it is,

1. To confirm us in the Truth of Christ's Messiahship, in whom all the Titles, Promises and Predictions of the Messiah do so plainly concenter and agree.
2. If Christ be a King reigning and executing Judgment and Justice upon Earth, then let us learn to obey and submit to him, and to the Powers set up and ordain'd by him; for 'tis by him that Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice. He it is that gives them their Commission, and 'tis his Authority by which they act; and therefore the Apostles bid us, to be subject not only for Wrath, but for Conscience-sake; and to submit to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake, whose Deputies and Vicegerents they are.
3. From his bringing Salvation to Israel and Judah, let us endeavour to have a share in it, and to rely upon it; for there is no Salvation in any other.
4. From his being the Lord our Righteousness, we learn where we are to seek for Justification, viz. not from any inherent Righteousness of our own, for that is nothing, or worse than nothing, and cannot abide the Trial; but by the Righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and by Faith in him made ours. *Abraham believ'd in Christ, and it was counted*

counted to him for Righteousness: and to them that follow the Faith of *Abraham*, is the same Righteousness imputed also, as we read, *Rom. 4.* 'Twas the Pride of the *Pharisees* to trust too much to their own Righteousness, and to expect Justification by the Merit of their own Works; but the poor *Publican*, that trusted only to God's Mercy, was justify'd far before them: The reason whereof is given, that they being ignorant of *Christ's Righteousness*, and going about to establish their own, submitted not to the Righteousness of God, and so lost all the Benefit of it; *Rom. 10. 3.* And therefore *St. Paul* desir'd to be found in *Christ*, not having on his own Righteousness, but to be cloth'd with his, which alone could cover the multitude of his Sins.

Lastly, From his being call'd, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**, let us learn to honour and rejoice in this Name, saying with the Psalmist, *Not unto us, but to thy Name be all the Glory*; praying with him, *Lord, deal thou with us according to thy Name*; that is, forgive us our Sins, and justify us by thy Righteousness, as thou usest to do to them that love thy Name: To which be all Praise and Glory.



D I S.



DISCOURSE LXI.

The GOSPEL for the Five and Twentieth
Sunday after *Trinity*.

St. John vi. 5——15.

Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias, and a great Multitude follow'd him, because they saw his Miracles which they did on them that were diseas'd : And Jesus went up into a Mountain, and there sat with his Disciples, &c.

IN this Gospel for the Day, we have Christ's Miracle of the Loaves, with the Occasion leading to it, and the Conclusion which the People drew from it.

The Account of it begins *ver. 1.* with *Jesus's* going over the Sea of Galilee, so call'd, tho in truth it was no other than the Lake of *Gennesareth*; a Lake of about a hundred Furlongs in length, and forty in breadth, in the lower *Galilee*; call'd also the Sea of *Tiberias*, from a City of that Name, situate upon the Banks of it. Being past over that Sea or Lake, *great Multitudes* follow'd and flock'd to him, drawn by the Fame of his *Miracles*, and the sight of the *wonderful Cures* he did upon them that were diseas'd : And indeed so able and cheap a Physician could never want Followers, who resorted to him from all Parts.

The Place where *Jesus* went, was up into a Mountain, or a Desert Place belonging to the City of *Bethsaida*, as we read, *Luke 9. 10.* There his Disciples found him, and there he staid a while, and sat down with them, imparting many things to them, and instructing them in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. For the time when this was done, it was a little before the Feast of the Passover; for the next words tell us, that *the Passover, a Feast of the Jews, was nigh.* This was set down not only to denote the Circumstance of Time, but because, as some tell us, our Saviour took occasion from thence to speak of their feeding upon

upon the true Lamb of God that was slain for the Sins of the World, figur'd by the Paschal Lamb, and by his holy and heavenly Discourses to prepare them for it.

In this mountainous and desert Place they remain'd awhile, far from any House or Home; where the Provisions they brought with them being spent, and no other Recruits or Refreshment being there to be had, they began to be in no small Distress; which our Saviour mercifully consider'd, and miraculously reliev'd: for *when Jesus lift up his Eyes, and saw a great Company come to him*, he had Compassion upon them, and bethought of making some Provision for them, for many of them came from far; calling therefore Philip to him, he saith unto him, *Whence shall we buy Bread, that these may eat?* or where shall we have Money to buy Subsistence enough for so great a Multitude? *This he spake*, not out of any Diffidence or Apprehension of Difficulty in the Case, but only to prove him, that is, to try the Strength of Philip's Faith, whether he had any lively Sense or Belief of his Divine Power and Ability to help them, and whether he had Compassion enough to move in their behalf, and to desire Relief for them in such a time of Need. This was the end of Christ's saying this to him, not to receive any Information or Assistance from him, for he himself knew what he would do; he knew well enough how to provide for them, and was resolv'd to do so.

But what was Philip's Answer to him? Why, distrustful enough; for *Philip answer'd him, two hundred Pennyworth of Bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little*: meaning, that they had neither Money nor Provisions enough for half that Company, that each may have any tolerable Refreshment. Andrew, Simon Peter's Brother's Answer, tho one of his own Disciples, was not much better: for he saith unto him, *there is a Lad here, which hath five Barley Loaves and two small Fishes; but what are they among so many?* The Sense whereof is, that the best shift we can make amounts to a very slender Pittance, and we are in no way or place to furnish out any more; and therefore 'twere better to dismiss the Multitude, and send them away, than be troubled with the Cry and Importunity of their Wants. But Jesus took little or no notice of the distrustful Discourse of his Disciples, having another and better way to make them sensible of their Error; and therefore bid his Disciples to *make the Men sit down*, and to place them so in Ranks, that they might be the fitter to

to receive what was administer'd to them. *Now there was much Grass in the Place*, which made it the more easy and convenient for them; *so the Men sat down*, in obedience to Christ's Command, tho they saw nothing prepar'd for them: *they were in number about five thousand*; St. Matthew adds, *beside Women and Children*, which increas'd the Number to many more. And then it follows, *that Jesus took the Loaves*, and when he had given Thanks, he distributed to the Disciples; that is, when he had blessed the Bread and the Fishes, and had given God Thanks for them, and implor'd his Blessing upon them, he began his Distribution, in the first place, to his Disciples. Where two things are observable:

1. That Christ would neither take himself, or give to others any Sustainance, before he had thank'd God for it, and crav'd his Blessing upon it; which is a good Warrant and Direction for our saying Grace (as we call it) before and after Meat: *Man liveth not by Bread alone* (saith our Saviour) *but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God*. The best Bread can afford no Nourishment without his Word to bless it; and unless he say the Word, there is no Sap or Strength in it. All the nutritive Virtue that it hath, is deriv'd from, and entirely depends upon God's Blessing; neither can Bread strengthen Man's Heart, unless he command it to do so. We often read in Scripture of *the Staff of Bread*, signifying it to be the Stay and Prop of our Lives; but the Word of God blessing it, and commanding it to feed us, is the Staff of that Staff, and sustains all that Virtue in it that sustains us: if God withhold his Blessing, this Staff will soon be broken, it can uphold us no longer, and we shall sink as much with Bread as without it. In the Prophet's Phrase, *We may eat much, and not have enough, and drink our Fill, and not be fill'd*; Hag. 1. 6. which may teach us, by Christ's Example, to implore the Blessing of God upon the Creatures provided for our Food and Nourishment. Again,

2. We may observe, that when our Saviour had given Thanks, he distributed first to his Disciples: his Kindness began with his more immediate Friends and Attendants, shewing that our Goodness and Charity is first and principally to be extended to our nearest Friends and Relations. This, Nature as well as Reason and Religion teach us, that our natural and spiritual Relations be first consider'd in all Acts of Bounty; for he that *provideth not for those of his own*

Gospel for the 25th Sunday after Trinity. 511

own House and Family, hath deny'd the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel; and tho we are to do good to all Men, yet especially and principally to the Household of Faith.

But to proceed in the Miracle; when he had distributed to his Disciples, the Disciples distributed to them that were sat down: and this perhaps gave the occasion to that ancient Practice in the Holy Sacrament, of distributing the Bread and Wine, first to the Priests there present, and they after to assist in distributing to all the other Guests. But however that be, 'tis certain that Christ here, as Master of the Feast, gave the several Proportions, in the first place, to his Disciples; and then they, as Waiters, distributed to all the rest, to every Man his Portion of Bread, *and likewise of the Fishes, as much as they would.* And it follows in the next Verse, they were all fill'd, and their Hunger well satisfy'd. By which we see, that a very small Pittance, with God's Blessing, can furnish out a Meal for many Thousands; and a little hard and homely Fare, if sanctify'd with God's Word, shall go farther, and fill better, than far more and greater Provisions without it. *A little Cake and Cruse of Water, shall give Eliah Nourishment enough to walk in the strength of it forty Days and forty Nights; 1 Kings 19. 6, 8. A little Pulse and Water fed Daniel and his Servants, and made their Countenances look fairer, fresher and fatter than all they who fed upon the King's Dainties, Dan. 1. 12, 15. And here a few Barley-Loaves and two small Fishes multiply'd, to the satisfying of above five thousand Persons, and gave them to eat all their Fill. God can make a Feast of a Crumb of Bread, and furnish a Banquet from a small Fish, that shall give better Content and Nourishment, than the richer Fare and Luxury of the Epicure. Better is a Dinner of Herbs (saith Solomon) with the Love and Favour of God, than a stall'd Ox and Hatred therewith: Prov. 15. 17. The Light of God's Countenance shining thro the Creatures he gives us, will afford better Entertainment to our Bodies, and put more Joy and Gladness into our Hearts, than the greatest Increase of Corn, and Wine, and Oil; Psal. 4. 6, 7.*

By all which we see, that 'tis the Blessing of God that gives all the Strength and Sweetness to our Provisions, and enables them to nourish us: a very little, with that, will serve and suffice a great Multitude; but a great deal without it, will yield no Savour or Satisfaction. Hence it comes to pass, that the Wicked are in straits in the midst of their Abun-

Abundance, and, like *Pharaoh's* lean Kine, devour the fat, and yet are never the fatter: whereas the good Man finds Comfort in a little, and sits easy and contented under the smaller shadow of his own Vine.

But to go on, *When they were fill'd, he said unto his Disciples, Gather up the Fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.* Gather up the Fragments! Why, what Fragments could remain of a few Loaves and two little Fishes, after more than five thousand had eaten of them, and were fill'd? One would wonder how so small a matter should hold out for so great a Multitude, or indeed feed half the Number. Sure none could fancy there should be any thing left of so slender a Pittance, after so many Bellies were fill'd, or fear that any thing should be lost, where there could be nothing to lose: And yet our Saviour put his Disciples upon gathering up the Fragments or broken Meat that remain'd, which one would think should be no hard Task, and that nothing should be found after so many had divided the Spoil.

But what happen'd, or how did the Disciples find it? Why, that the next Verse tells us, *Therefore they gather'd them together, and fill'd twelve Baskets with the Fragments of the five Barley-Loaves, which remain'd over and above unto them that had eaten.* Strange! when all the Meat they had would not near fill one Basket, that after so great a number had eaten and were fill'd, they should take up and fill twelve Baskets with the Fragments that were left. Their Provisions it seems increas'd by eating, and, like the Widow's Cruse of Oil, multiply'd by being consum'd; and when all were fully satisfy'd, there remain'd above ten times more than was at first set before them.

This the People saw, and found by their own Experience, and were all amaz'd at it. But what follow'd upon it? Why, *those Men, when they had seen the Miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the World.* They had heard much of a great Prophet that was to come, and that he should come with Miracles, and doing many mighty Works: This they had learnt from the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and were then in an earnest Expectation of him: And here beholding with their Eyes this great Miracle, they all concluded with one Voice, that this for certain was the Prophet that was promis'd, and whom they had been long looking for. Their Judgment herein was sound enough, and their Conclusion well-

well grounded. But these taking him for the promis'd Messias, began to expect great things from him, that he should deliver them from the *Roman Yoke*, and restore again the Kingdom to *Israel*, and thereby advance them to Power and Preferments in the World: To which end they sought to make him a King, and to set him up as their General, to fight their Battels for them against their Enemies. And no wonder that an oppress'd People should seek to make him their King, who could raise an Army by a Word's speaking, and feed them too by Miracles, without Taxes and Contributions. But Jesus perceiving the Carnality of their Minds, and knowing his Kingdom not to be of this World, departed again to a Mountain himself alone, and return'd to his former Privacy and Prayers, from whence he withdrew over the Sea again to *Capernaum*: But those People, who had eaten of the Bread after that the Lord had given Thanks, missing him and his Disciples, took Shipping also, and went to *Capernaum*, seeking for Jesus; and finding him there, said to him, *Rabbi, when camest thou hither?* hearing that he went not in the Ship with his Disciples, but walk'd thither on the Sea. But Jesus giving them no Answer as to the Time or Manner of his Coming, said unto them, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the Miracles, but because ye did eat of the Loaves, and were fill'd*; ver. 26. meaning, that they consulted only their own Interest, and follow'd him more for the Loaves and their worldly Advantage, than for any Love to his Person or Doctrine: and therefore to wean their Minds from all such vain Expectations from him, he seeks to divert them from these earthly to more heavenly Matters, saying, in the next Verse, *Labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting Life, which the Son of Man shall give you, for him hath God the Father seal'd*: that is, set not your Hearts on corporal Food, nor dream of any earthly Greatness or Victories from me, for that is none of my Business; but raise your Minds to that spiritual Food, that can alone feed your Souls to eternal Life. This is the Food that the Messias is to give you, who is a King of the Father's making, and not of your chusing; and is to be install'd in his spiritual Kingdom by God, and not by you. This is the Use that Christ would have made of this Miracle, and not that carnal one, which the Jews and others may fondly expect from it. These are the Circumstances that went before, and

514 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*

that follow'd after this Miracle, which is the Subject of the Gospel, and of our Meditations for this Day. From whence we may infer the following Lessons; as,

1. From Christ's feeding so great a Multitude with such small Provisions, we may learn to depend upon God's Providence in the greatest Extremities; for we see he is both able and willing to help us, either by giving much, or blessing a little: *The Lions may lack and suffer Hunger* (saith David) *but they that fear the Lord shall want nothing that is good; for God will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that lead a Godly Life.* He that hath given us his Son (saith the Apostle) *how shall he not with him freely give us all things?* 'Twere endless as well as needless to recount the many Promises extant in Holy Scripture to this purpose, which for our Encouragement are back'd too with many Examples to confirm them. The Israelites were fed with Quails and Manna from Heaven in the Wilderness, where ordinary Provisions fail'd them: *Elijah* was fed in the Desert by Ravens, who brought him Bread and Flesh every day; and the Widow of *Sareptha*, with a handful of Meal in a Barrel, which wasted not, and a little Oil in a Cruse, which fail'd not till the Day that God sent Rain upon the Earth; 1 Kings 17. And here a few Loaves and two little Fishes serv'd to feed and fill above five thousand Men, beside Women and Children; which may teach us that Lesson of the Apostle, *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by Prayer and Supplication, let your Requests be made known unto God:* Phil. 4. 6. which our Saviour inculcated by many Arguments in his Sermon on the Mount, willing us to *seek first the Kingdom of God and its Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto us;* Mat. 6.

2. From Christ's giving of Thanks before he distributed the Provisions, we may learn always to crave a Blessing before Meat, and to return Thanks after it. This was our Saviour's Practice here, and upon all Occasions of this kind; and the Apostles have taught us the same: *Every Creature of God is good* (saith St. Paul) *if it be receiv'd with Thanksgiving;* 1 Tim. 4. 4. As if all the Goodness of them to us depended upon our giving of Thanks, which gives them all their Virtue and Nourishment. To the same purpose speaketh he in another place, that all things are *sanctify'd by the Word of God and Prayer*, which give them all their Blessing, and without it they cannot do us any good:

Of

Of which therefore it will behove us to be always mindful.

3. From Christ's multiplying such small Provision, to the serving and satisfying of so many, we may be abundantly convinc'd of his Divine Power, that he is the Son of God, yea, God blessed for evermore; for none but he that made, preserves and blesteth all things, could do such a Miracle.

4. From Christ's commanding the Disciples to gather up the Fragments, that nothing be lost, we may learn not to waste any of God's Creatures, which he is pleas'd to afford us, nor to make Spoil of his good Gifts for the Abundance that we enjoy; for this is such a vile Abuse of his Bounty, as provokes him to withdraw what we so idly consume, and to make us know the Worth of his Blessings by the want of them. Carelessness and Profuseness naturally lead to Poverty, and many have been brought to wish for that in their Penury, which they have vainly thrown away in their Prosperity; and therefore that we may not want, let us take heed that we do not waste any thing that God is pleas'd to give, but labour rather to improve than consume his Blessings.

5. From this Miracle of the Loaves, let us all concur with the People, in saying, *Of a truth this is that Prophet that should come into the World.* This he abundantly prov'd by a Power of Miracles, confirming all that he said; and therefore his Errand being to teach and to save Mankind, let us all receive his Doctrine, and obey his Precepts to those Ends.

Lastly, From Christ's turning the Minds of his Disciples from vain worldly Expectations to more heavenly Matters, let us learn to wean our selves from this World, to which we are too much addicted, and set our Affections more upon the things above, which are infinitely more worthy of our Thoughts and Desires; let us labour not so much for the perishing Food of our Bodies, as the immortal Food of our Souls. Our Saviour declar'd himself to be the Bread of Life, or that living Bread that came down from Heaven, and is able to bring us there. Let us therefore say with the Apostles, *Lord, evermore give us of this Bread, to feed our Souls to eternal Life.*

Of which therefore it will behave us to be always mindful
Gospel for the 24th Sunday after Trinity. 212

From Christ's multiplying such small provisions to the
feeding and satisfying of so many, we may be abundantly
convinced of his Divine Power, that he is the Son of God,
God blessed for evermore; for none but he that made
powers and besteth all things, could do such a Miracle.
From Christ's commanding the disciples to gather up
the fragments, that nothing be lost, we may learn not to
waste any of God's Creatures, which he is pleased to send
us, not to make spoil of his good Gifts for the Advantage
that we enjoy; for this is with a vile Abuse of his Liberty,
to deprive him to withhold what we to our continuance, and
to make us know the Worth of his Blessings by the want of
them. Carelessness and Profligacy naturally lead to Poverty,
and many have been brought to ruin for that in their
Pursuit, which they have vainly chosen away in their
Folly; and therefore that we may not want, let us
be careful that we do not waste any thing that God is
pleased to give, but labour rather to improve than con-
sume his Blessings.

From this Miracle of the Loaves, let us all consider
with the People in saying, Of a truth this is our Father
that sends down his Son into the World. This is abundantly proved
by a Power of Miracles, confirming all that he said; and
therefore his Disciples being to teach and to give Ministry,
let us all receive his Doctrine, and obey his Precepts to
the End.

From Christ's turning the Minds of his Disciples
from vain worldly Expectations to more heavenly Matters,
let us learn to wear our selves from this World
to which we are too much addicted, and let our Affec-
tions more upon the things above, which are infinite-
ly more worthy of our Thoughts and Desires; let us
account not so much for the perishing Food of our Bodies, as
the immortal Food of our Souls. Our saviour descended
himself to be the Bread of Life, for our living here and
ever down from Heaven, and is able to bring us
let us therefore say with the Apostles, Lord, we commend
our selves unto thee, and we feed on, and drink of thee.

The End of the Second Part of the Fourth Volume







Hole, Matthew,

Practical Discourses On All the Parts and Offices Of The Liturgy Of The
Church of England Wherein are laid open the Harmony, Excellency, and
Usefulness of its Composure. In Four Volumes. Useful for all Families
Bd.: 4,2

London 1716

Liturg. 586-4,2

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10590552-8